

GLADYS  
MITCHELL

A JAVELIN  
FOR JONAH



# **A Javelin for Jonah**

***Gladys Mitchell***

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*By the same author*

DEAD MAN'S MORRIS  
COME AWAY DEATH  
ST. PETER'S FINGER  
PRINTER'S ERROR  
BRAZEN TONGUE  
HANGMAN'S CURFEW  
WHEN LAST I DIED  
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THE WORSTED VIPER  
SUNSET OVER SOHO  
MY FATHER SLEEPS  
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THE NODDING CANARIES  
MY BONES WILL KEEP  
ADDERS ON THE HEATH  
DEATH OF A DELFT BLUE  
PAGEANT OF MURDER  
THE CROAKING RAVEN  
SKELETON ISLAND  
THREE QUICK AND FIVE DEAD  
DANCE TO YOUR DADDY  
GORY DEW  
LAMENT FOR LETO  
A HEARSE ON MAY-DAY  
THE MURDER OF BUSY LIZZIE

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To  
Jehane, with love  
I wait for thee in thine own garden.  
I tune the lute for thee.

Edward Carpenter

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## CHAPTER 1

### On your Marks



**O**f course, we have to be on Christian name terms here,” said the Warden.

“*Have* to be, sir?” said Hamish Gavin.

“It promotes confidence and mutual esteem between students and staff.”

“I see, sir.”

“Gassie, my dear fellow.”

“I beg your pardon, sir?”

“Not ‘sir’, but ‘Gassie’.”

Hamish remembered that the Warden’s name was Gascoigne Medlar.

“I beg your pardon, sir. I did not understand,” he said. “By the way, is it true, sir, that entry to the College—to Joynings—is restricted to people who show aptitude for athletics and swimming?”

“And gymnastics, of course. Well, roughly, yes. It is so much easier to keep such types out of mischief, you see. Now, as to your own name...”

“Yes, sir?”

“Perhaps you will not take it amiss if I suggest that Hamish is a little unusual so far south of the Border.”

“I am not sure that it is so very usual north of it either, sir.”

“Well, not to beat about the bush—it is not my habit to creep all round a subject—could we perhaps call you James while you are with us?”

“Certainly, sir, if that will ease my stay.”

“Right. Fine. Well, now, James, I hope you realise that this place is not altogether what one is accustomed to think of as a college, not even in the way some of our great public schools use the term.”

“Indeed, sir, I am under no illusion. Your letter was most explicit. I understood from it that Joynings is a privately-owned Borstal institution.”

“It would be going to extremes, James, thus to describe my creation—I may say, my life-work,” said the Warden coldly. “None of our students has *ever* been



in contact with the police. We have the sons and daughters of some of the highest families in the land, people of excellent social standing, people who—oh, well, no matter. We house and educate, among others, young men who have been expelled from their public schools, often for quite trivial offences, and young women similarly uprooted. We also take students who are, for one reason or another, out of parental control and unfitted to govern their own lives...”

“Drug-pushers? Lay-about? Sleepers-around?” asked Hamish helpfully.

“Victims of circumstance. Products of broken homes. Misfits in the great mosaic we call life, James. Unfortunates who possess false or insufficient clues to the Great Crossword Puzzle. That is the way to describe the majority of our students, I think. Ours, we like to believe, is a work of rehabilitation and of healing. We are sociologically viable. We...”

“Yes, sir, I quite understand. And what part am I to play? My time-table, perhaps—?”

“Oh, you had better ask Henry,” said the Warden. “Henry will know. He sees to all that kind of thing. It is regrettable that you are to be with us for so short a time. You take up residence abroad at the end of October, I believe.”

“Yes, sir, to brush up my languages.”

“I am told that you are expecting to enter the diplomatic service. Do you really think it a wise choice?”

“I have no idea, sir. I believe my mamma made it for me, and I dislike to hear her criticized adversely.”

“You have already interrupted my discourse twice in order to interpolate remarks which I should hardly describe as diplomatic. That is all I meant, James,” said the Warden, giving Hamish, this time, a wintry smile. “To pass on; to pass on. I hope you will settle down here, even for so short a stay. We like people to grow roots. Roots, you know, make for the total stability of the plant or tree.”

“Alas, sir, I fear that the rain will pass over me and I shall be gone and the place hereof will know me no more.” Hamish spoke these flippant words aloud, but added mentally, “And a good thing, too.” He already slightly disliked the Warden and he had a feeling that the Warden already more than slightly disliked him.

“You have a great deal of self-confidence, I perceive, James,” went on Gascoigne, ignoring the picturesque scriptural allusion. “I imagine that you are highly qualified in other directions, too.”

“For life, sir, or for the diplomatic service?”

“I was thinking, strangely enough, of your duties here, James, I have a parochial outlook, I fear. Still, however unworthily I may sustain the role, I do happen to be the head man of my little domain.”

“Oh, quite, sir. After all, it is better to be first in a small Iberian town than second in Rome.”

“I fail to detect the relevance of that remark, James.”

“I understood that you were once the second master of Isingtower School, sir.”

“Oh, that! Past history, my boy. A great deal of water has flowed under the bridge since my Isingtower days.”

“Yes, of course, sir. Have I your permission to go to Henry and ask what my duties here will be?”

“Oh, lectures, you know, in French and German. You will have to find out how much the students are prepared to take, of course.”

“No doubt they will be prepared to take whatever I am prepared to give, and that will be of my plenty, sir, I assure you.”

“You are extremely self-confident, James.”

“So you have already been kind enough to say, sir.”

“I understand that you obtained your Blue for boxing,” said the Warden, changing the subject with some abruptness.

“Yes, sir. There was not a great deal of boxing talent when I was up.”

“You may find it useful, I am afraid.”

“I am prepared to employ all my talents, such as they are, in the service of the College while I am here, sir.”

“That is splendid, James. I am delighted. By the way, I believe we need a coach for the men’s aquatics. Do you swim?”

“Like a dolphin, sir, or so my mamma has said.”

“Those animals,” said the Warden, “are said to rival man in intelligence.”

“I am sure they surpass him in good nature, sir, and they are also said to have a tremendous sense of humour.”

“Yes, well, off you go to find Henry,” said the Warden hastily. “He will be on the field. Look for a small, spare, wiry man wearing an atrociously loud checked tweed cap with his light-blue blazer.”

With this description to aid him, Hamish found Henry without difficulty. He introduced himself.

“I’m Gavin. Mr. Medlar sent me out here to ask what you want me to do.”

“Well, first,” said Henry, “while you’re talking to me, keep your eye on those

blokes who are throwing the discus. Ever been hit by a discus?"

"No, nor bitten by a shark, I'm glad to say."

"Either can happen to you here. One of those lads has got it in for me, so, although I can't guarantee where a discus is going to fetch up, I'm not taking chances with this lot."

"Couldn't you move out of orbit?"

"No, because I'm measuring the throws. What did you want to see me about, did you say?"

"I was told you'd know what my duties are."

"Let's see, you've come to replace Merve while he's in hospital. That means French and German, unless you've something more exciting to offer."

"Russian and Chinese?"

"Are you serious?"

"Perfectly serious."

"Oh well, that would make a change, then." He left Hamish's side to mark where a discus had ploughed into the turf. When he returned he said, "And, of course, you'll be wanted mostly for the swimming. We aim to tire 'em out, so everybody here has to sweat like hell at something or other. Nothing like aching muscles to take the glamour out of a spot of mayhem."

"I gather that you don't go in for a summer vacation here. I was told that my work will be continuous until I leave in October."

"That's right, in a way, but the staff take turns at going on furlough. You'll get your turn in September, when Merve used to have his. The students are never let out on the loose until they leave, of course."

"And when is that?"

"When their people ask for them back, or when they reach the age of twenty-three. Not many stay as long as that, though. The fees are too heavy, I suppose. What did you make of Gassie?"

"He wants me to be known as James."

"That's hardly an answer—or is it?"

"I really think it is."

"He's an idealist, you know. At least, he thinks he is, but if one of the students clobbered him I fancy the Old Adam would soon pop up and show fight. Still, there's not much fear of that. Keeps himself *to* himself, does Gassie. The only contact he has with the students, apart from trousering the vast sums their parents pay to keep them here, is to sympathize with their troubles and promise them to get rid of any member of staff who has brought those troubles

about. Which same he does.”

“Good Lord!”

“Don’t worry. He’s seldom called in to arbitrate. The students prefer to deal with matters themselves if any cloud appears on the horizon.”

“As witness my predecessor? Was he a cloud?”

“Merve? Oh, well, I must admit that, when he stirred himself, Merve was a bit of a sadist. His methods might have intimidated little prep-school boys, but he ought to have known better than to think they would answer with this lot. After all, he used to be one of them. He ought to know how they tick.”

“Do the students gang up on us, then?”

“Occasionally. Not on the whole. They’re individualists and, of course, as you’d expect, extremely selfish. There’s not much brotherliness here.”

“Oh, well, anything to get away from the trade-union movement,” said Hamish.

“Duck!” cried Henry, as a discus flew dangerously close to their heads. Recovering himself, he marked the indentation where the missile had landed. “A hundred and eighty-one feet!” he said exultantly. “That was Rixie. I may venture to book him.”

The athlete came galloping towards them, a tall, long-haired youth wearing a string vest and track-suit trousers.

“How about that, then?” he demanded. “Good enough for the book?”

“Good enough for the book,” said Henry. He produced a notebook from his blazer pocket and inscribed the young man’s name. “Allow me to present you to James, who is going to introduce you morons to Russian and Chinese as soon as he gets the chance.”

“Mitt, James,” said the youth, extending a large, grimy hand. “Rixie here.”

“That was a damn fine throw,” said Hamish, shaking hands with him.

“A *bloody* fine throw,” amended the youth. “Guess I’ll call it a day now, Harry boy. It might discourage me if the next one fell a bit shorter. Besides, along comes Jonah. I don’t want to be ill-wished.”

“Is he typical of the men-students?” asked Hamish, as Rixie cantered away.

“Except for the fact that they’re mostly delinquents, there isn’t a type,” replied Henry. “Rixie slaughtered his father. It was brought in as accident, but his mother told us a few things and there’s no doubt whatever in my mind that it was murder. However, according to our standards, he’s almost a model student so far as conduct is concerned, and reasonably intelligent as well. On the whole our academic standards are not high. Gassie, in fact, lives in apprehension of the

day when some wayward genius—a Shelley or a youthful Einstein—will turn up and have to be catered for, but it hasn't happened yet. Hullo, Jonah! Finished for this afternoon?"

"I think so," replied a stout man in a singlet and white flannels, an athlete, Hamish decided, who was running to seed. "I've just dislocated Derry's right wrist. I didn't mean to, of course, but I'm afraid I've made the other chaps angry, so I thought I'd better clear out of the gym for a bit and give Derry time to cool off at the hospital."

"His *right* wrist? But he's our shot-putter against the Squadron Club on Saturday!" groaned Henry. "What a fool you are, Jonesy!"

"Well, dammit, he did ask for it! He chucked an Indian club at me. He's not one of my squad, either. So I got hold of him, and that's how it was. See you later, I expect." He left them and sauntered off.

"So there you have the Jonah of this establishment," said Henry. "Well, the discus people appear to have packed up, so let's go along in and have some tea."

"What did Rixie mean about being ill-wished?" asked Hamish.

"What I've just said. Jones is literally a Jonah. If he weren't Gassie's brother-in-law we should have seen the last of him long before this. Mind you, if only he didn't put this hoodoo on the works, he ought to be worth his place. He *could* be a first-class gymnast. Of course, he drinks—that's his trouble—and it's a funny thing that, no matter what goes wrong or what accident happens, somehow or other Jones is responsible for it. It's uncanny—the way, without any evil intention whatsoever, he can manage to bish things up."

"Are you sure there isn't evil intention?" asked Hamish. "My mamma," he went on, "is secretary to a psychiatrist who is consultant to the Home Office, so I've been brought up to have a suspicious mind. My father, moreover, is an Assistant Commissioner of Police, so you see, with one and the other, I'm bound to be somewhat biased."

"I should keep quiet about your connections if I were you, then. You don't want the students to mark you down as a copper's nark."

"I thought none of them had ever been in trouble with the police."

"That's not their fault," said Henry drily.

"What about if they abscond? Do you get much of that sort of thing?"

"Oh, very seldom, very seldom indeed. You're thinking of the police again, aren't you? But we don't call in the police if a man or a girl runs away. We merely inform the parents and leave them to cope."

"Even if a man and a girl ran off together?"

“Oh, yes. We accept no responsibility at all. The parents understand that from the beginning. Old Gassie, who, as you’d expect when he runs a place like this, is a politician, points out that they’re lucky to have a college willing to take their delinquent offspring. If they won’t admit that, then he washes his hands of them. There’s nothing like coming it a bit, you know. Gassie’s no good at all in some ways—for instance, if you run into trouble, it’s not the least bit of use to think he will back you up—but he does know how to handle the parents. ‘Take it or leave it,’ he says in effect. ‘If you care to send your naughty lad or girl here, we’ll do our very best to keep him or her happy and out of mischief, but, apart from that, we promise nothing.’ Makes ’em sign on the dotted line, too. Of course, he can afford to high-hat them. We’re not allowed by our constitution to take more than a hundred students at a time, so he can lay down the law more or less as he pleases. We’ve always got a waiting-list, you see.”

Hamish digested this information and that evening communicated it, and his observations, in a letter to his mother.

“I think I am going to enjoy it here, dearest mamma. We are very beautifully situated, high up and with a view, I am told, over five counties. The house is large and finely furnished and only the staff and the women students live in it. The men sleep in huts called halls. These are dotted about the grounds, which are well-kept and spacious. Emphasis is on sport—mostly athletics and swimming in the summer, and we play both codes of football, with hockey and lacrosse for the girls, in the winter. The food is above praise and the students have the same to eat as we do. There are ten of us, including the Warden, seven men and three women. The chief of staff, known officially as the Dean and to everybody as Henry, is a very decent sort, and I think I shall get on pretty well with the others. Two of the women are young and seem to be popular with the students. The third is a most fearsome old battle-axe with whom, of course, I’ve fallen deeply in love. It’s reputed that she beats the women students when they don’t please her, but that, I fear, is apocryphal, much as I should like to believe it, for the majority of our girls—God bless them!—strike me as hussies.

“I am put down to take French and German and have offered Russian and Chinese as well. I have only two lectures a day and no supervisory duties, but we are all expected to help coach athletics and swimming. We have two splendid pools, one outdoor, the other under cover. The students do pretty much as they like—I mean they don’t have to attend lectures— but they are not allowed cars or pocket-money. However, as we are miles from anywhere, they seem to take a philosophical view and sweat so hard that the standard of athletics, I am told, is

surprisingly high. We have a match on Saturday against the Squadron Club; so that will give you some idea of our quality. Besides, I'm told, though I haven't seen it yet, the Warden's cupboard is festooned with the most fantastic array of sports' trophies you ever saw. He must be the Lord High Pot-Hunter of all time, and the students have picked up the habit, I suppose."

"Yes, indeed," Henry had agreed when this was mentioned. "Of course, all the silver gets put behind bars every night. We may love our students, but we don't trust them. I'm not sure that this withdrawal of all pocket-money is such a good idea, you know. They are not even in a position to earn any, either. It must be a frightful temptation to whip a solid silver cup and flog it to a fence and have a beano on the proceeds. Anyway, look after your own things and don't leave any money about. I don't say you *would* get it swiped, but it's better not to offer any chances. I suppose Gassie didn't show you his stock-cupboard with all the loot in it? If not, there's no doubt he will. It's the pride of his life. He's got some obsessive ideas about encouraging the students, you know. Actually, I think he wants to put on a sentimental, proud father act when visitors come, but he may be sincere enough, so I mustn't be uncharitable. Anyway, in this trophy-cupboard he also keeps the sports-gear worn or used by students who've made college records. You can imagine the sort of thing: four pairs of spikes worn by the team who put up the fastest-ever time in the sprint relay; Pong's shot which brought us a special cup in 1966; Long's discus; Wong's javelin; Bong's hammer, which went so far that it nearly took the head off the Lord Lieutenant; the high-jump bar which Mong cleared at six feet seven in 1969, and Song's bamboo pole with which he made the record vault before glass-fibre poles came in and catapulted the world record to over eighteen feet. Well, you can imagine the kind of thing, as I said. He's even got the track-suit he himself wore in the days of long ago when his University, for which he was reserve in some dim event or other, beat a weak A.A.A. team and got a match against Oxford or Cambridge—I forget the details. Get him to tell you all about it. He loves the story."

"Good Lord! Was *he* ever an athlete?"

"Of some sort, no doubt. That's why we go all out for athletics here, and make academic work an also-ran."

So far as academic work was concerned, Hamish found that the first of his lectures was to prove a trial of strength between himself and the alumni. From various senior-common-room warnings he had received, he was not unprepared for trouble and he was willing enough, although not eager, to face something of a

show-down before he was accepted by the students. He walked into his handsome lecture-room on the first floor of the mansion—each lecturer was allotted his own lecture-room to which his students came or not, as they pleased—and found it crowded. He walked to the dais, glanced at his audience, said, ‘Goodmorning, ladies and gentlemen,’ and placed his lecture notes on the desk.

“What’s your name, bugger?” asked a youth in the front row.

“Well, not that,” Hamish replied. “I will tell you what it is at the end of the session. My subject this morning is Jean-Paul Sartre. I shall speak entirely in French and when I have finished you will write in your notebooks, in either French or English, the gist of what I have said.” He glanced over his notes and began to utter. So did the students. They kept up a continual low murmuring all the time he was speaking. When he paused, so did they. When he resumed, they did the same. Hamish carried on his discourse without raising his voice. At the end of a quarter of an hour he stopped, smiled and said, “That’s it, then. Ten minutes to get down what you can remember.” He seated himself. The students began to write. He wondered what was going down in their notebooks. At any rate they had ceased to mutter. All appeared to be extremely busy, although he had no illusions about the sort of thing which was probably being written, for now and again there was a smothered guffaw as one student showed another what he had put into his notebook.

The first climax came fairly soon. The youth who had asked him his name came out to the desk and said, “Please, sir, what’s the French for...” (an unprintable word even in these days). He spoke loudly and clearly. The group looked up interestedly. One of the women students tittered. Hamish rose to his feet and picked up a piece of chalk as though he was going to write on the blackboard. Instead, he dropped the chalk, seized the student by the collar, swung him round and kicked him half across the room.

“That’s the French you are asking for,” he said pleasantly, “and, if you can’t spell it, perhaps I can be of further assistance.” He looked at the class. “Does any other gentleman require help?” he asked quietly.

“Yes, I do,” said a hulking young man at the back of the room. “You’ve hurt that poor boy. I demand satisfaction. I don’t like to see you hurt that poor boy.”

“Oh, are you the champion of the oppressed?” asked Hamish, measuring him with his eye. The young man, who appeared to be among the oldest and was certainly the biggest of those present, stepped out from the ranks and came towards him. Without further speech he swung a heavy fist at Hamish’s head. Hamish avoided it easily, put his left fist with a sharp jab into the man’s brightly-



coloured shirt-front and then clipped him under the jaw with his right. It was not, and was not intended to be, a knock-out blow.

“Hey!” said the man, blinking. “How did that happen?”

“Come again, and I’ll show you.”

“Right,” said the fellow. He grinned good-naturedly. “In the gym, though, and, I think, with the gloves on.” He returned to his place. The youth whom Hamish had kicked limped out of the room, no doubt (thought Hamish) to confide his troubles to the Warden. Hamish seated himself again. He felt certain that his own troubles were by no means over, but he felt also that the preliminary skirmish had gone his way. He had no intention of allowing anybody to read out the scurrilous stuff which he was quite sure some, if not all, had put into their notebooks. Instead he said, “I shall now translate my lecture for you, so perhaps you will correct your own work and form your own opinion as to how much of the lecture you understood.”

There were no more interruptions. When he had finished, amid what he thought he recognized as the brooding silence which precedes a thunderstorm, he wrote a short vocabulary on the blackboard and braced his shoulders against the missiles which he more or less expected would be thrown at him once his back was turned. These, singularly enough, did not materialize. Turning again to the students, he remarked in a quiet tone, “Some of you may care to use some of those words in your essay. The subject is *Mémorial d’un Gladiateur Romain*. Needless to say, the work is entirely optional, as I understand is customary here, but I shall be happy to mark anything sent in.”

“So what *is* your name?” asked one of the women students.

“The Warden has suggested that I answer to the name of James, mademoiselle,” replied Hamish.

“Come up and see me sometime, James,” said the damsel, who appeared to be about eighteen.

“I suggest you wash your face and comb your hair before you issue your invitations,” said Hamish. “The class is dismissed.” He stood in the doorway as they clattered out and, waylaying the large student, said to him, “And what’s *your* name, may I ask?”

“Richard,” he replied. “In other words, Dirty Dick, so you’d better look out. You won’t catch me napping again.” But he grinned amiably as he spoke.

“Fine. We meet at Philippi, then. Let me know when you can spare the time.” Hamish gave the young man a friendly clap on the shoulder and they walked out side by side to the college canteen.

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## CHAPTER 2

# Long Jump with Casualties



Two circumstances made life at Joynings, so far as Hamish was concerned, very much simpler and easier than he might have expected. One was the lack of brotherliness among the men students to which Henry had referred. They were prepared to sabotage, more or less effectively, lectures which did not please them, but of physical ganging-up against authority there was little sign. The second circumstance was that the promised set-to with the gloves between Hamish and his hulking challenger had resulted in a spectacular knock-out by Hamish, followed by a cheerful, unembittered relationship with the defeated Richard which Hamish found undeniably helpful.

Richard, he learned later, had been expelled from his school for half-killing an unpopular sadistic prefect. He was now twenty-one years of age and had been at Joynings for four years, during which time his size, weight and strength had brought him to a position of leadership to which his other attributes scarcely entitled him. Hamish, bit by bit, learned the case-histories of a good many of the men-students. By no means all of them were discreditable, he thought.

Miss Yale, the senior woman lecturer—the battle-axe to whom Hamish had referred in his letter home—was more reticent about the women students, but these, with no encouragement from him, told Hamish more about themselves than he ever learned from headquarters. They also made overtures to him which so young a man might have found embarrassing but for the fact that Hamish had a fund of common sense and a robust sense of humour inherited from his mother, a useful streak of Puritanism which came to him from his father, a trick of summing-up people and situations which Dame Beatrice, his mother's employer had taught him, and (possibly the product of all these) a superb self-confidence which was all his own and which, by the unreflecting, was often mistaken for arrogance.

With all his colleagues he got on reasonably well, although his preferences were for Henry and the redoubtable Miss Yale. That formidable middle-aged

Amazon could beat him at golf (there was a links twenty miles from the College) and was, he discovered, an ex-county champion at throwing the javelin and, but for unfortunate family affairs which had prevented her from appearing at final trials, a near-certainty for an international vest in those Dark Ages before Hamish had been born.

The match with the talented Squadron Club was lost by Joynings, a circumstance moodily and unfairly related by the losers to the non-appearance of their first string in the shot—the youth put out of action by Jones. To those who expressed their views to him, Hamish pointed out, logically enough, that even if Derry, the athlete injured by Jones, had taken part and had won his event, the result of the match would have been unaltered. The College still could not have won a match which was decided on an aggregate of points.

He himself was mostly engaged in coaching swimming, but he soon found that, except for Jones, who seemed to be odd man out in most of the College activities, there was a cheerful spirit of give and take among the members of the senior common room and that he could always call upon somebody to act as starter or hold a stop-watch or even watch over a nervous learner while he himself was engaged with the more talented and further advanced of his flock.

Henry he had liked from their first meeting, but naturally, at his age, he had more in common with the younger men. There was an ex-Cambridge Blue named Martin, who was second coach under Henry for the javelin, hammer, discus and shot, and a slightly older man, whose age was still well under thirty, who was the coach for the jumps; he was called Barry, for, by Gascoigne Medlar's ruling, nobody was known by anything other than his first name. There was also a member of a provincial but famous athletics club who coached all the running—not a favourite series of events at Joynings, as it happened, so he was only a part-timer at the College. He retained his amateur status by acting nominally as a lecturer in science. He talked with a Midlands accent and was named Jerry.

Except for Medlar himself, the only other man on the staff was Jones. The men's gymnasium was his province, but he had a rooted dislike of hard work and had formed a habit of leaving his charges to amuse themselves while he himself came out on to the field or the running track and watched other people's efforts, particularly where the women students were at practice. These loathed him; the men students, on the whole, despised him.

There were only eighteen women students while Hamish was at the College and their guardian was the redoubtable Miss Yale. She also helped with athletics

coaching, and in addition to her there was a full-time instructor for dancing and gymnastics (an extremely beautiful young woman named Lesley), and a part-time coach for diving. This was a bouncing, enthusiastic girl named Celia, who spent three days a week at Joynings and the rest of her time as a swimming-instructor at the public baths in the nearest town.

After his first full house, Hamish began to find his lectures less and less well-attended until, by the third week, his regular audience was reduced to four. It consisted of the burly Richard and three girls. Richard remained faithful, not because he wished or intended to receive instruction in the tongue of Racine, but in the interests, as he saw them, of propriety.

Asked one day by Hamish, towards whom, since their scrap in the gymnasium, he had assumed the attitude of a protective father-figure, why he bothered himself to attend classes in which, it was clear, he took no interest whatsoever, the hulking youth replied, "You're not safe with those types who sit in at your lectures, Jimmy-boy. Straight off the streets, those beazels."

"Only two of them," Hamish said gravely. "The other one wants to learn French."

Apart from a growing and satisfying friendship with Martin, Hamish followed popular custom at the College and fell in love with Lesley. His liking for Henry, whose singleness of purpose he admired, increased as the days and then the weeks went by, but his curiosity was aroused and maintained in respect of Miss Yale. A woman of, undoubtedly, strong personality, she seemed to be the only member of the senior common room, so far as Hamish could discover, who maintained discipline as of right, instead of depending, as the others did, solely upon the goodwill of the students. Unlike everybody else, first names being the rule of the College, she always insisted upon being called Miss Yale (at least to her face) and even the men students seemed to be in awe of her. The girls were openly afraid of her and betrayed it by the unwilling respect they shewed when they had to face her and by their glares of black hatred and their muttered threats behind her square-shouldered, uncompromising back when they left her presence.

"Why do you stay here?" Hamish asked her, when their acquaintanceship was almost a month old. "You're not solely an athlete, unless the College prospectus lies. Haven't you got a pretty respectable degree? Couldn't you be bossing some vast comprehensive school, or a college of education, or be a top brass in the Civil Service or something?"

"I like it here," Miss Yale replied. "I get a kick out of making these little

dopers and thieves and street-walkers toe the line.”

“It doesn’t seem much of a life for a woman of parts, if I may say so.”

“Suits me, that’s all. By the way, Barry goes on furlough next week.”

“Yes, it’s on the notice board.”

“Has he asked you to take over the jumps while he’s away?”

“No. Is he likely to?”

“Heard him mention it to Henry.”

“I’ve a fair amount to do in the pool, you know. We’ve that triangular swim against Swordfish and Triton the week after next, and their sprint times are pretty ominous compared with anything we can clock up at present, although our longer-distance men are doing well.”

Barry approached Hamish after tea that afternoon.

“Jimmy lad,” he said, “I know you’re pretty full up, but could you give an occasional eye to the long-jump fellows while I’m away? The triple jump doesn’t matter. We haven’t a bird who can beat forty feet, and our high-jump performers are nothing special, either. Jerry and Lesley will take a look at them occasionally, and that will do. As soon as we can get the proper landing-area—I want a Nissen ‘poly-pit’ if Gassie will run to it—there’s that young chap Kenneth who’s going to try the Fosbury Flop, but we daren’t risk him breaking his neck on our present equipment, so he’ll have to stick to the straddle for the time being. No, it’s the inter-college long-jump record I’m after. Colin can manage twenty-three feet and over when he meets the board right, and I believe he’s got the potential for twenty-four feet if he sticks to it. He wants more flight, that’s all. His take-off is too low. If only he can get height and perhaps use the mid-air kick instead of the hang, I believe we’ve got a real prospect in our stable.”

“I’ll do what I can,” promised Hamish, “but, as you know, I spend most of my time at the pool. I’ve got a prospect there, too. It’s Paul-Pierre, that misfit from Nantes who was chucked out of Rendlesbury for knifing the science master. He’s clocking just under eighteen minutes for the fifteen hundred metres free-style. He could get into the next Olympics if he sweats at it.”

“Yes, for France, though, not for us.”

“Come, come!” said Hamish. “Think European! What about the Common Market? Besides, I believe I’ve got a second string who is coming along very nicely, or will be, once I can get through to him. Patriotism, although still, in some of its aspects, a dirty word, retains a certain amount of influence on my mind, same as on yours, and this young fellow is a Scot. It took me some little

time to spot him. He's a dour, black-browed character with a chip on his shoulder because he thinks he was unfairly expelled from school. He trains without help and spends most of his time churning out length after length with no regard for speed, style or fatigue, but I believe he's got what it takes."

The youth's name was Neil. He had no intimates, let alone friends, and, when spoken to, would reply either in the briefest possible manner or not at all.

"A difficult bloke," continued Hamish, "but—and this is where patriotism rears its bloody but still unbowed although diminished head—he is a fellow Scot, as I say. Wonder what his surname is?"

This turned out, upon friendly enquiry, to be Menzies.

"My mother's maiden name," said Hamish, delighted by this coincidence.

"Aye," said the scowling youth. "I'll tell ye this, mon," he continued, "I could beat yon Froggie over the fifteen hundred."

"Paul-Pierre?"

"Aye."

"Well, let's ask him whether he'd like to try you out. He'll be Olympic class if he keeps up his training, though, and you've never actually timed yourself over the distance, have you?"

"I can swim his bluidy head off."

The match was arranged and Paul-Pierre won it, but so narrowly that Henry, who was watching, was astounded. Paul-Pierre swaggered.

"I was not really trying, me," he said. Neil turned and clouted him.

"We'll dae it again, when ye *are* trying," he said, when the Frenchman scrambled out of the water into which he had been knocked. Paul-Pierre scowled and muttered, and, after that, Hamish arranged so that their training-times did not coincide. Neil, he decided, might be content to say it with fists, but Paul-Pierre's proved handiness with a knife was not a matter he intended should be displayed in any circumstance over which he himself had control.

A fortnight later Neil approached him.

"Gin I apologized to yon Frog for belting him into the water, think you he'd swim me again?"

"Well, it's a handsome, manly offer, Neil. I'll ask him. But it's to be a proper apology, mind. None of our backhanded Hieland insults."

For the first time since Hamish had known him, the boy grinned.

"That's a' richt," he agreed. Paul-Pierre accepted the apology superciliously but without giving actual offence, and the match was arranged for the following day. In the morning, at the staff breakfast-table, Miss Yale announced that she

was off to London for the day to keep a dental appointment.

“Oh, no, nothing special,” she replied, in response to a kind enquiry from Henry. “Just routine. Don’t suppose he’ll find anything to do. I’ve got teeth like a horse.”

As this was only too true, nobody knew what to say about it, and Henry hastily went on, “I’m off myself this morning, but I’ll be back for lunch. Got to charm Gottswalds into letting us have that landing-area for the high jump sooner than they think they can give it to us. I’d like to surprise Barry with it when he gets back. He’ll be delighted.”

“That takes two of us off the field, then,” said Miss Yale. “Can you lend a hand, James?”

“Only until eleven,” replied Hamish. “I’ve got a timed fifteen hundred metres coming off in the pool, and I must be there, not only stop-watch in hand, but ready to break up the fight which may ensue when the race is over.”

“Oh, it’s another race, is it?” asked Henry, interested, in his dedicated way, in all that went on in the College. “Sorry I can’t manage to stay and watch.”

“Yes. Neil has challenged Paul-Pierre again. As P-P. won last time by less than a yard, I think that, this time, Neil might turn the tables.”

“But if Neil can beat him, he’s an Olympic prospect, isn’t he?” asked the lovely Lesley.

“We shall see.”

With two of the staff absent there were to be no lectures that morning, so Hamish went on to the field immediately breakfast was over and watched the long jump as he had promised. Men and girls trained together where the facilities allowed for this, and there was a mixed bag of long-jumpers, some serious-minded, some frivolous, lined up at the top of the runway.

At the end of the line was Colin, Barry’s prospect for the inter-college record. He was well-built for long-jumping—tall, long-legged, flexible, beautifully muscled and very fast indeed from his starting-mark down to the take-off board. Moreover, he very, very seldom missed the board and, when he did, he was behind it, not over its front edge, and so his jump counted.

Hamish watched in silence for a bit. Then, while the pit was being raked, he walked over to the line of athletes and said, “I’ve got to get back to the pool soon. I wonder if you’d mind if I concentrated on Colin for two or three jumps?” He turned to the lad himself. “You want to get airborne,” he said. “You could easily add a foot and a half to your jump if you’d manage a higher take-off.”

At this, Jones, who had left his gymnasts to amuse themselves as they

pleased and who had been watching the jumping, came up, hands in pockets, and said unnecessarily, "You're not too bad, Colin, but you want to jump higher, man. Higher and wider, as the swimming instructor said to the breast-stroke novice who ought to have been corrected, instead, for using a scissor kick. That's right, isn't it, Jimmy? A joke, Colin, boy. Where's your sense of humour?"

"In abeyance, naturally, while he's concentrating so hard," said Hamish. "Get lost, Jonah, old chap. Can't you see we're busy? Come on, Colin. One or two more, and then I've got to get along to the pool."

"I wonder whether it's any good trying the hurdle again?" said the youth. "I couldn't manage to get over it when I tried it with Barry, but perhaps it would help me now."

The hurdle to which he referred was nothing more than a light cane placed across the long-jump pit and supported on two short uprights. It was so delicately poised that a touch would bring it down. It proved an obstacle which Colin found no help. If he cleared it, he had lost concentration and took feet off the length of his jump; if he took it with him, he was using his old style, but found that striking the light cane was a hindrance because again his concentration was affected.

"It's no good, Jimmy," he said, after his third attempt. "I think I'm better without it."

"Oh, I'd stick at it for a time or two," said Hamish. "But please yourself, of course. Perhaps Barry will come back with some new and more helpful ideas. He's sure to have been trying to work something out for you while he's on leave."

Hamish walked over to the outdoor pool, cleared it of swimmers and called up his two competitors. Neil was taciturn, Paul-Pierre ill-tempered. The race was a fiasco. At the halfway stage, when Paul-Pierre was half a yard behind, he swam to the side of the bath.

"Cramp," he said, in response to Hamish's enquiry. Neil swam doggedly on, but, without the incentive of competition, failed to make as good a time as on the previous occasion.

Hamish expected an enquiry from the others as to the result of the race, but found that any interest which might have been shown in it was utterly and entirely eclipsed at lunch-time by news of a serious accident to the long-jumper, Colin.

Henry had returned and was addressing the staff table as Hamish took his seat. Jones's place was empty and the atmosphere in the students' part of the



dining-hall was gloomy and menacing.

"I can't think what Barry will do when he hears about it," Henry was saying. "I have his holiday address, so I shall write to him. I am glad I do not have to give him the news by word of mouth."

"Barry will murder Jones," said Jerry, "and quite right, too. What's Gassie got to say about it?"

"He doesn't know yet," replied Henry. "We're waiting for a report from the casualty department at the hospital. I'm to ring them up at two. I've had to let Colin's parents know, of course, because he's been taken to hospital, but I want to hear something quite definite before I worry Gassie."

"I do think," said Lesley, "that you ought to speak to him at once, Henry, just as a precaution in case the news is bad. Pity you couldn't have been here when it happened. Then you could have heard Jonah's story at first hand and have something with which to compare Colin's version."

"Where is Jonah now?" asked Celia, who was in College for the afternoon.

"Down in the village, drowning his sorrows as usual, I expect," said Martin. "He went belting off in his car half an hour ago. Only hope he's too scared ever to come back."

"What happened exactly?" asked Hamish. "I was out at the pit myself for a bit while Colin was practising. Everything seemed all right then. Jones was advising him to get a bit more flight, but everybody tells him that."

"You may well ask what happened," said Jerry. "That lunatic Jones took it upon himself to coach Colin as soon as you had gone over to the pool. Finding that the cane hurdle didn't seem to help Colin to get height, what does that gor-blimey fool do but bring over one of those heavy benches which the students sit on when they take off their track-suits or change out of their spikes."

"You don't mean he put a *teak bench* across the long-jump pit?" asked Hamish incredulously. "Why, Colin comes powering down that run-way at the rate of knots and is going like a bullet when he takes off from the board. No wonder he's knocked himself out. Jones must be mad!"

"We'll be lucky if it's only broken shins," said Celia. "I've had a bit of nursing experience, and it wouldn't surprise me if the boy has internal injuries as well. He might have killed himself. Jones is just that much lucky that he didn't."

"But what made Colin fall in with such a crazy idea?" asked Martin. "Did Jonah bully him?"

"No, he egged him on, according to the girl Clarice, and then, when Colin jibbed, he taunted him with being yellow. Naturally the misguided kid couldn't

stand for that,” said Henry. “Apparently Jonah had worked it out that the very fact that Colin would hurt himself if he *didn’t* clear the bench would make sure that he *did* manage to jump over it—only, of course, he didn’t. It seems (again according to our eye-witness) that Colin tore down the runway, took off like a tornado, copped the beastly bench ankle-high, and that was that.”

“Honestly, Jonah ought to be certified!” said Martin. “You never know what stupid trick he’ll get up to next. Did you hear what he did to one of Celia’s divers?”

“He shouldn’t be allowed at large,” said Lesley.

“He ought to be poisoned,” said Jerry.

“Well, don’t let the students hear you say so. There is more than one who might take the hint,” said Henry. “We’ve got quite a few nut cases here, you know.”

“I wish one of our psychopaths *would* lay him out,” said Lesley. “He came into my gym the other day and that silly little Carol took her eye off what she was doing and pulled a muscle because she didn’t make a proper landing. That’s the second one of my special squad he’s managed to lay out. He told Margot to rake the long-jump pit the other day, and she’s slipped a disc. This was before he managed to put Colin out of action. I was absolutely livid about it. ‘There goes the Chronos Vase, and it’s all your fault, you incompetent, poke-nosed, drunken idiot!’ I said to him. ‘Why on earth, if you *had* to interfere with the long-jump, couldn’t you get one of the men to rake the pit?’

“‘Oh, an osteopath will soon put the wench right,’ says Jonah, ‘or I’ll do a spot of manipulation on her myself, if you like.’ I was so furious with him that I picked up a jumping-rope and swung the leather-covered, sandbagged end of it at his head. He was actually grinning, you know, as though he’d said something clever. ‘I’d like to *kill* you!’ I said. ‘And I *would* kill you if I ever found you putting your filthy hands on one of the girls.’ What do *you* say?” she concluded, turning to Henry.

“Do your gym squad stand any chance of lifting the Chronos Vase?” asked Henry.

“Not now we’ve had these accidents.”

“Then I think,” said Henry, getting up from table, “that, if you *do* kill him, you are also entitled to dance on the remains.”

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## CHAPTER 3

# Blots on a Copybook



Joynings had been established originally by a syndicate of do-gooders who had bought the house and its grounds and had drawn up the College constitution. Gascoigne Medlar was not, in actuality, its first Warden, although he boasted that the College was his own foundation. The first Warden had been appointed by the syndicate. He was a clergyman and a well-meaning idealist, unfitted by nature, upbringing and education to cope with the type of delinquent for whom the original Joynings had been planned. He lasted for nearly a year, but resigned when he had recovered in hospital from an attack by a homicidal member of the junior common room who had disliked his sermons on brotherly love.

Gascoigne Medlar had not been appointed to take his place. Instead, he had bought the house and grounds when the syndicate, acknowledging failure, had put the property up for sale, had retained such parts of the constitution as appeared advantageous, and had jettisoned the rest. The original students, boys from broken homes for the most part, had been admitted without charge. Gascoigne changed that. He was not interested in delinquents as such, but only in the delinquent but athletic children of wealthy parents. He advertised widely at first, and, when the response came, he charged high fees, having spent much of his own money on improvements. He also paid very high salaries in order to attract a first-class staff. If they turned out to be less than first-class, they went. There was only one exception. Jones, his relative by marriage, Jonah though he turned out to be, was allowed to stay on in spite of his misdemeanours. Staff and students complained, but Gascoigne Medlar was adamant.

“He is my dear wife’s only living relative,” he would explain. “She would return and haunt me if I ever turned poor Davy adrift. He has nobody in the world but me.”

“Doesn’t seem in character, old Gasbag taking a stand like that,” said Jerry to Hamish when he was discussing Jones’s latest misadventures. “You’d think, if

only for his own sake and the reputation of the College, that he'd cut out the sentimental angle and get rid of the fellow. He's been nothing but a trouble-maker and a nuisance ever since he's been here. He spends a third of his time half-bottled, another third chasing the women—Ma Yale has complained more than once on behalf of the girls here—and the rest of his life laying out the best of our athletes through sheer damn interfering idiocy.”

“Perhaps Gassie feels that Jonah is the victim of his own weaknesses with regard to A and B,” said Martin, who was with them, “and that, so far as C is concerned, Jonah may be misguided but well-meaning.”

“I doubt whether Barry would support that view,” said Hamish. “The unfortunate old thing will be thirsting for Jonah's blood over that long-jump accident to Colin. He'll be very, very angry indeed when he comes back from leave and finds that the lad has been laid out with a couple of broken shins.”

“He knows about it already. Henry has written to him. Lesley isn't feeling very sweetly disposed towards Jonah, either,” said Jerry, “although, personally, I think she overplayed her hand when she went with a mouthful of curses to plague the Old Man about that idiotic girl of hers. After all, to do blighted Jonah justice, he swears he hadn't asked the wretched kid to rake the pit, and if Lesley had taught her how to use her muscles correctly, she wouldn't have dislocated a chunk of her silly little spine, would she?”

“Well, one might perhaps give him the benefit of the doubt there,” admitted Martin, “but he's a menace and a misfit, all the same, and, whether he's Gassie's relative by marriage or not, I think he ought to be driven out into the wilderness to fend for himself and not live here in the lap of luxury. Why, his quarters are as good as those of Gassie himself, and what does he do to deserve them? He's supposed to be in charge of the men's gym, but how much time does he ever spend there? Instead of getting on with his own job, he's making a thorough pest of himself, one way or another, on the field and the track, or else he's propping up the bar in the Bricklayers' Arms. It isn't good enough, especially in a place like this.”

The opinion expressed by Martin had been endorsed by Henry, and on more than one occasion. Hamish often thought that Henry was like a small, alert sheepdog, chivvying, but never biting, the lost lambs who formed the bulk of Gascoigne Medlar's flock. Henry brought to his work a monkish singleness of purpose which was remarkable even among his gifted and dedicated companions. These employed their various talents honestly, cheerfully and without stint. They could not be said to love their charges, but they did well by

them. Henry was unique at Joynings in that, with him, it was possible not only to hate the sin but to love the sinner. Except for Gascoigne himself, he was the only member of staff ever to have been married. He had lost his wife under tragic circumstances and had found at Joynings a kind of anodyne. Under him, the College had been transformed from a private, although luxurious, prison into a sought-after and surprisingly successful reformatory.

Some credit for this success was also due to the Warden and some to the students themselves. The majority of them—the men in particular—had been worsted in their fight against authority when they were—so to speak—in the outside world, and were relieved, if not openly thankful, to be put out to grass for a bit in the easy-going, safe (although fenced-in) pastures of Joynings. They were lost lambs, not black sheep; weak, rather than wicked; ridiculous and sometimes vicious children, but not unprincipled, criminally-minded adults. For one thing, they had been carefully selected and vetted and were not a representative cross-section of the misguided, delinquent young, and the fact that they were athletes and swimmers meant that they were misfits who had a saving grace.

As for Gascoigne, there was no doubt that he was a businessman first and a philanthropist second, but he had spent on the College a great deal of the money he had inherited from his wife and had added one amenity after another until it was doubtful whether the students could have enjoyed better living-conditions anywhere else. Jones, his wife's brother, had been left nothing under her will, but by giving him a place on the staff of the College and by turning a deaf ear to all the complaints against him, Gascoigne argued that he had done what he could.

What Gascoigne really thought of his brother-in-law not even Henry could say. The accident to Colin was never publicly referred to by the Warden. Jones's first appearance at the high table after the accident was hissed by the long-jump squad, but there was no concerted demonstration against him. However, he soon brought himself again into prominence over another and a different matter.

The first indication of the trouble which was to ensue came in the form of a red-faced, thick-set man in a pin-striped suit and a bowler hat—clearly his Sunday rig-out—who approached Jerry on the running-track one afternoon and asked where he could find Jones.

"You can't," Jerry replied. "All visitors have to see the Warden."

"I want Jones."

"Well, you'll have to see the Warden first. What do you want with Jones, anyway? You're not a parent, are you?"

“None of your business, mister. Which way do I go?”

“I should try the front door.”

The man strode off. Jerry turned back to his squad of runners and thought no more about him until he saw the man returning an hour later. He was carrying a cheap suitcase and was accompanied by a girl whom Jerry recognized as one of the maids who waited at the high table.

“Good-bye, sir,” she said, as she passed him.

“Not leaving us, Bertha?” he asked. She gave something between a sniff and a sob and did not answer. The man tugged her sleeve with his free hand.

“Come on, come on,” he said. “The sooner you’re out of this hell’s kitchen the better, my gal.”

Exactly what had brought about Bertha’s abrupt departure from Joynings was revealed a little later. The story came from Miss Yale, who confided it to Henry, Hamish and Lesley when they were taking tea with her in her quarters a fortnight after Barry had gone on leave.

“Well, Jonah has done it this time,” she said. “I’ve talked turkey to Gassie about it and I’ve given it to him straight. If Bertha is pregnant, Jonah will have to go. We can’t afford that sort of thing here.”

“Her father came up,” said Henry. “Gassie told me about it. Gassie is in no end of a taking. He’s made up his mind to speak to Jones, so I think, Miss Yale, your words got home to him. The father threatened to make enough stink to get the College closed. He couldn’t do that, of course, but he could make things very awkward. He says he’s going to write to the local paper and blacken us with all sorts of accusations. It seems that Bertha has made up wild tales about goings-on between the men and the women students, and her father has swallowed them. Useless to point out to a man of that type that he could lay himself open to prosecution. Even if he were convicted, the damage would have been done.”

“Yes, everybody would be saying there’s no smoke without fire,” said Lesley. “Well, nobody would be more thankful than I if Jones were kicked out, but do you think Gassie would do it? He seems strangely attached to that gosh-awful misfit.”

“I think he feels he owes him something,” said Henry. “He’s his brother-in-law and, apart from his salary, Jonah is absolutely penniless.”

“That’s all the more reason why Jonah should behave himself,” said Miss Yale.

The story had an embarrassing aftermath for Hamish. Taken, at an early stage in his sojourn at Joynings, to see the Warden’s collection of trophies, he

had shown so much interest in the various items that Gascoigne had asked him whether, during his leisure time (of which he had plenty, for his duties were not onerous), he would be willing to re-arrange and re-catalogue the treasures.

They were kept in an ante-room which opened out of the Warden's study, and Hamish had been given a key to the locked chamber. He always tried to arrange matters so that he could go in when he knew that Gascoigne was elsewhere engaged. One morning, therefore, having no lectures and no other commitments, he let himself into the ante-room, leaving the door ajar, and soon was so much absorbed in a task which interested him and satisfied his curiosity, that it was some time before he realized that a conversation was going on between Gascoigne and Jones, and that the subject of it was Bertha, the servant whom Jones had seduced.

When this dawned upon Hamish he found himself in the unenviable position occupied by most involuntary eavesdroppers. He could emerge from his lair and excuse himself by reminding Gascoigne of his commission to review the trophies, thus risking embarrassment to all concerned, himself included, or he could remain where he was (and this, under the circumstances, seemed the tactful course) and expunge from his mind everything which he could not help overhearing. At the point when Hamish first realized what the conversation was about, it was running thus:

"And I can't put up with it," Gascoigne was saying. "The girl's father has been here, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I prevented a confrontation between him and yourself, Davy. He was in a mood which I can only describe as dangerous. If what this man has told me turns out to be true, I shall have no option but to ask you to leave. I don't *want* to demand your resignation..."

"You would never be willing to part with your dead wife's brother, dear boy! Surely you could not bring yourself to do anything so unkind?" said Jones, in a most unpleasant tone.

"I should have no option, Davy, and so I warn you."

"Hardly for *you* to warn *me*, is it?"

"There is a limit, you know, and if this wretched girl has a child..."

"My *dear* chap!"

"Well, her father seemed to think..."

"What a suspicious mind he must have! My dear Gassie, I assure you that there is no possibility..."

"I must hope that you are right. But you know what these girls are. If she has a child, whether it is yours or not, you will have laid yourself open to the most

unpleasant consequences.”

“And you will have laid yourself open to paying compensation, of course, as you are my banker, dear boy; so, if the girl and her father attempt to put the screw on—well, you’ll know what to do about it, won’t you? You owe me already more than you’ll ever be able to pay.”

“Now, look here, Davy—.”

“Oh, be your age, my dear chap! Forget it! You can always square those sort of people, and you have plenty of my sister’s money for a hand-out.”

There was an angry exclamation from Gascoigne and then Hamish heard a door slam. He peered out through the crack of his own inner door. Jones had gone. Gascoigne Medlar sat down at his desk, pulled some papers towards him, fidgeted with them for a minute or two and then thrust them into a drawer and followed his brother-in-law out of the room. Hamish made his own escape and went in search of Martin, wishing that he could confide in him, for the conversation he had overheard hinted unpleasantly of blackmail. “There’s a film-show this afternoon instead of field and track practices,” said Martin. “Jerry will come for a run if you’ll join us. Henry doesn’t need any help in the hall.”

“Oh, good. What’s the idea, though?”

“Jerry wants to get into training for his club’s first crosscountry run, and Henry thinks a change will do the students good, I suppose. Can you be ready by two? That will give us a nice couple of hours and time for a bath and a change before tea. I’ve laid in some bangers. We can fry them over the gas-ring in my room. It will be like being back at school again.”

“Yes. Good! Fine! What about Barry, though? Wouldn’t he like to join us now he’s back from furlough?”

“No. He’s going to visit his wounded warrior in hospital and look in on Lesley’s damaged gymnasts.”

“What is Lesley doing, then?”

“Putting her Chronos Vase squad through it. Miss Yale and Celia are watching the film and the Warden says he’ll look in at it if he can. I say, did I ever tell you about my interview when he collected me on to the strength here?”

Hamish had heard the story before, but he was fond of his ingenuous friend and invited him to go ahead. He knew that Martin’s interview had not been so very different from his own, except for one pardonable mistake which Martin had made, a pitfall which Hamish had avoided.

“Well,” said Martin, “I only came down with a rather fluky third, you know, and I was applying for every scholastic job within reach, so I applied for this



one. I hadn't a hope, really, but it soon dawned on me that the last things the Warden cared about were academic qualifications. What he was after were good-tempered hearties, so the thing went somewhat as follows: (You have to imagine me with all my ganglions quivering, and being prepared to embrace the boss's knees at the drop of a hat in order to get a job.)

*Me.* Good morning, sir. It is very good of you to see me.

*Him.* Good morning, my dear fellow. Sit down, sit down, won't you? Now, let me see. What did we apply for?

*Me.* Assistant lecturer in applied maths, sir.

*Him.* Ah, yes, to be sure. Of course. I remember now. Well, my dear fellow—by the way, we are all on Christian name terms here, so I shall address you hereafter as—let me see now—your application form? Here we are! Yes, of course! I shall address you in future as Martin. Well, now, Martin! Applied mathematics, as it is understood at Joynings, is a severely practical subject. There will be a certain amount of lecture-room work, of course, but nothing which need worry you. Henry will know. Perhaps you would go out on to the field and find him. Look for a small, spare man wearing a regrettable tweed cap with his blazer. He will tell you what he wants you to do. Coaching of field athletics, I believe it is. You won an inter-college event, I understand, in some form of throwing competition when you were up.

*Me.* Yes, sir, I—that is, well, the shot. It's not really a throw, it's a putt. As a matter of fact, sir...

*Him.* Gassie, my dear Martin, Gassie.

*Me.* I didn't mean to be loquacious, sir. I'm very sorry. I only meant to tell you...

*Him.* Loquacious?

*Me.* Gassy, sir."

Hamish laughed. "You *are* an ass!" he said.

"I could see a new thought had come to him," went on Martin, "but you know, Jimmy, I can no more envisage myself addressing the Warden as Gassie than taking a trip in a space thingummy to the moon. However—I don't believe I've told anybody this bit—I went on to tell him that, when he put me right, I was only going to say that I was really a javelin man. We were short on the shot that year, so I agreed to take it on, but it wasn't my best event. All he said was, 'Splendid, my dear Martin. Henry is the small, alert man in the loud tweed cap

which he insists upon wearing with his blazer.’ ”

“His method of terminating all interviews, I think,” said Hamish, reserving to himself the fact that Gascoigne’s last interview had not been concluded in quite that way. “What about this run?”

“The run? Oh, I’m leaving that to Jerry. He’ll know a route. About seven miles is my idea, but he may want to stretch it to twelve.”

“If he does,” said Hamish, “I think you and I will take a short cut home and fry the bangers.”

Jerry, however, was willing to allow that six or seven miles at that time of year would be sufficient.

“It’s damned hot today,” he said. “Heard the latest about Jonesy?”

“If you mean in connection with Bertha’s father,” began Martin, “the answer is yes.”

“Oh, no. Since then. It seems Jonah has been to old Gassie and offered his resignation. One of my sprint relay lot told me.”

“No!” exclaimed Martin and Hamish in chorus.

“Fact. Had it from Jonah himself, so the lad said.”

“When?” asked Hamish, the conversation he had overheard being fresh in his mind. “When did you hear this?”

“Just a few minutes ago. Jonah told this chap that the Bertha story—which is all round College, by the way—was all my eye, but that it had hurt him to think Gassie believed it, so, in order to resolve the situation (the kid’s words, not mine) Jonah had decided to leave.”

“Does anybody else know?” asked Martin.

“Soon will, anyhow. Well, now, do you chaps think we’d better just look in on Henry and Ma Yale to make sure everything is still all right in the dining-hall before we go off?”

The idea that this was at all necessary tickled Hamish, since Henry possessed apparently hypnotic or occult powers where the management and control of the students was concerned, and Miss Yale was the last person on earth to need assistance with College discipline.

“Oh, I shouldn’t think he’d thank us,” he said. “Bit of an interruption, if he’s already got the film started, wouldn’t you think?”

“I don’t know. There’s a funny feeling abroad,” said Martin, “and there’ll be whoopee, anyway, once the students know Jonah is going to leave us.”

“If he really *is* going to leave us,” said Hamish, again remembering the last words he had heard Jones address to the Warden, and the arrogant sound of a

loudly-slammed door.

The cross-country run was enjoyable and was completely without incident. When it was over, the three runners, bathed and changed, assembled in Martin's room to fry the sausages and settle down to consume these and the rest of the feast which he had provided, and the College, intent upon its own tea, appeared to be at peace. The two young women lecturers, with Henry and Barry (who had returned from the hospital), were entertained to buttered scones and cake by Miss Yale and Gascoigne, it was assumed, was taking tea in his own quarters, so that the only person who appeared to be unaccounted for was Jones, although nobody was particularly concerned about this, as he often took tea with Gascoigne before spending the evening at the Bricklayers' Arms. His name, however, came up as usual.

"I can't understand Gassie over this Bertha business," said Lesley. "Hang it all, here he had the chance to get rid of Jonah once and for all, and without a decent testimonial, at that. Instead of kicking him out, he just lets him resign as though he was a decent type like any other of us."

"So long as he goes, I don't care how it comes about," said Celia. "I never got around to telling you what he did to one of my divers. It was the week before Jimmy joined the strength, and I honestly believe that if Jimmy had been with us at the time he would have treated Jonah as one of my girls told me he treated that little swine Kirk at his first French lecture. If Jones—"

"I wish to heaven we could keep Jones out of the conversation," said Barry. "The very sound of his name makes me feel murderous."

"Me, too," said Lesley. "How did you find my two girls? You went to see them, didn't you?"

"More cheerful than my poor Colin, although how the young idiot could have been such a fool as to let Jones con him into attempting a stupid trick like that, I shall never know." Barry, to everyone's embarrassment, blinked back tears.

"I think your two hussies were at fault, too," said Miss Yale to Lesley. "A trained gymnast should never allow her concentration to be upset when she's practising."

"Thank you, I'm sure," said Lesley angrily. "And I suppose my other hussy should have refused point-blank when she was asked to rake that pit?"

"Now, now," said Henry. "We've no evidence that Jones intended to attract the girl's attention in the gym, and none that he asked the other girl to do the raking. I know the fellow is a complete liability, but fair's fair, after all."

“There was nothing fair about the way he treated Colin,” said Barry, now scowling down at the cream-cake on his plate. “I’ve had it out with him, though. I don’t think he’ll pull any more of his tricks on my squad.”

“Talking of that,” said Celia, “well, I speak as an outside observer, in a way, I suppose, being only on part-time here, but don’t you think perhaps there’s a bit too much of this ‘my squad’ business? I mean,” she went on, for she was a courageous but obtuse young woman, “I think Lesley is far more concerned about those two girls than about Colin, and Barry feels vice versa. Oughtn’t we to think about the College as a whole, so to speak?—if you see what I mean.”

“The difficulty about that,” said Henry, “is that what *everybody* thinks about, *nobody* thinks about particularly. Even you, Celia, couldn’t get your diving belles up to the excellent pitch you do, unless you were single-minded about your divers and didn’t give a hoot for Jimmy’s swimmers, for example.”

“Even *I* give all my attention to the girls,” said Miss Yale, “and don’t give a damn for the men, so I think perhaps Celia has got on to something, in a way. Trouble is, as Henry points out, our standards would soon go down if everybody mucked in at everything. You’ve simply got to specialize, and that involves bias.”

“It’s by playing off squad against squad that we get our results, I suppose,” agreed Lesley. “Our various gangs are much keener on outdoing one another in collecting pots and medals, than they are keen on the College as a whole. Personally, with the types we have to deal with, I’m all for the competitive spirit, although I really am terribly sorry about Colin, Barry, really I am.”

Barry crumpled up the paper serviette which Miss Yale had supplied, thanked her abruptly for the tea and stalked out.

“Somebody has started this rumour that Jones will be leaving us,” said Miss Yale, “but is there really anything in it, do you think?”

“Nothing at all,” said Henry. “I heard it, too, and went straight to Gassie. First *he’d* heard of it, he said. He was sure it is nothing but a canard. I hope the students aren’t up to some mischief, that’s all.”

After tea the students always employed themselves in any legitimate way which suggested itself to them. There were various clubs and societies; there was a drama group, a choral union, an orchestra, and a chess club. There were facilities for make-and-mend; the workshops were open; coaching still went on for those who were particularly ambitious and energetic; there were tennis courts, a clock-golf course, the indoor and outdoor swimming pools, provision for squash and badminton. There was also a first-class library and an art room.

The evening meal was at eight and it was the custom for the whole staff to attend it. They sat at the high table in an orthodox setting and the high table at night always took on a festive appearance, with the men in dinner-jackets and the women in semi-formal attire. The glass and silver on the long tables all down the hall sparkled and shone, and the wine (strictly rationed but invariably provided) was poured by servants as impeccable and silent-footed as those in any nineteenth-century ducal mansion. Although the students were as talkative and noisy as those in any other college dining-hall, decorum reigned and the general atmosphere was happy and relaxed, as it was almost bound to be in the presence of such good food and palatable (although limited) wine.

The staff table had one vacant seat. As it was the custom for the whole faculty to be present at the evening meal unless anybody happened to be on leave, Gascoigne, at a pause in the conversation, remarked upon Jones's absence from the board.

"I have no idea where he can be," said Henry, who was seated, as usual, upon the Warden's left. (Miss Yale invariably sat at his right hand, as the senior woman present). "I don't remember seeing him since just after lunch."

"I really wish he wouldn't go into the village so often," said Gascoigne. "It doesn't do our image any good to have him always hanging round that public-house."

"I'll mention it to him, if you like."

"Oh, no, don't do that. He must please himself, of course. I keep no tabs on the staff so long as they carry out their duties."

"But he doesn't carry out his duties," said Miss Yale. "When is he ever in the gym? He prefers messing about on the field and causing injuries to the students and annoying and embarrassing my girls."

"I shall speak to him about that. I have already dealt with him over the recent incident involving Bertha."

"I shall do more than speak to him. I'll drop the shot on his head if he doesn't leave the girl students alone, and so I've told him." And Miss Yale took wine in a determined manner.

Gascoigne turned the conversation on to other matters. The meal ended at nine, and the staff and students trooped out. At ten the Warden left the senior common room to which, as usual, he had been invited for coffee, and at eleven Henry did visiting rounds and locked up the mansion to keep out any prospective Romeos who might fancy a visit to the women students' rooms and to keep indoors any of Miss Yale's charges who had an urge to invade the halls of

residence. He then took the keys to the Warden and they talked about College affairs and had a night-cap together as usual. Before returning to his quarters on this particular occasion, however, Henry had something unusual to report.

“Jones isn’t back,” he said, “but I thought I’d better lock up as usual, so I did. All right?”

“Jones? Davy? Dear me! I suppose he went to the village. He very often does. I was surprised, all the same, not to see him at dinner. Perhaps his car has broken down.”

“The Bricklayers’ Arms closes at half-past ten, and he knows plenty of people there,” said Henry. “It’s a quarter to twelve. He’d have got a lift back by now.”

“Oh, well, he’ll have to knock somebody up when he does come in, but it’s very unsatisfactory of him, I must say. I hate the servants to be disturbed at night.”

“I shan’t be going to bed yet. I’ll wait up for him, if you like.”

But midnight came, and twelve-thirty. At a quarter to one Henry decided that Jones had found somewhere in the village to sleep. He might be too drunk to drive, or, if his car had broken down, he might have begged a bed at the Bricklayers’ Arms and would hope to cadge a lift back to College in the morning.

There was no sign of Jones at breakfast, but nobody on the staff felt any concern until lunchtime came and there was still no word of him.

“I can’t understand it,” said Henry. The Warden looked gloomy and wagged his head, but offered no words.

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## CHAPTER 4

### The Whale's Belly



**S**urely he can't have slung his hook without a word to anybody," added Henry to Hamish, as they left the building, following their after-lunch coffee, Henry bound for the field and Hamish to meet his men's and women's relay squad for a coaching-session in the covered pool. Ordinarily he preferred the outdoor fifty-metre swimming bath, but the drill on this particular afternoon was to be the practice of starts, take-overs and turns, and for such the indoor pool was more satisfactory than the other.

He was able to make use of it because there was no diving practice that day, Celia being on duty at the municipal baths in the town. She had first claim on the indoor pool when she was at the College, for its boards were of standard height and there were no swimmers to get in the way of her divers. These also preferred a covered bath because there was no wind to upset their balance and concentration. The upland pastures which surrounded Joynings were always breezy, they complained.

Neither Hamish nor Henry had hurried over coffee, for the students took no part in sports or swimming for at least an hour after lunch, but by the time Hamish entered the covered bath-house his squad were changed and ready for him. It was while they were resting after the first work-out that he received what he interpreted as a hint. It seemed that the whereabouts of the missing Jones was known to some members of the College, if not, in fact, to all. It began when the end door opened and an attendant, bearing clean towels, entered. He deposited these and went out again, whereupon one of the girls exclaimed, "Goodness! I thought it must be Jonah sneaking in! The divers say he often creeps in here to study form!" She ended with a giggle.

One of the boys said, "Jonah would have a job to sneak in here today. And you keep your little trap shut, darling."

"Oh! Oh, yes." She giggled again. "I forgot the whale's belly."

"Less of it." The boy jerked his head towards Hamish. "It's not only walls

that have ears.”

Hamish affected to take no notice. He felt that he had picked up a clue, but also that it would be of no use to probe too deeply into the girl’s disclosure, although she had made it clear that his students knew where Jones was, and probably had put him there.

“Well, come on,” said Hamish crisply. “Two lengths each, medley teams, remembering what I’ve told you about the turns and the take-over. Get in, back-strokes. Bunch up more, Phyllis. You want to try for the devil of a shove-off at the start. Get into your stroke as your head is coming up. That right arm should be out of the water as you surface, ready to pull. And you, Ken, *throw* yourself back when you start. Think of a dolphin and emulate its tactics.”

“Sure you don’t mean a whale, Jimmy?” said the boy, grinning. So, wherever Jones was, it seemed unlikely that the students intended his incarceration to be anything but a rag, deduced Hamish.

“On your marks,” he said. The medley relay teams consisted of four swimmers each. It was the custom, since, on the whole, the men were faster than the girls, for Hamish to mix the teams. The back-stroke swimmers had to be a man and a girl respectively, but a man took over from the girl on the butterfly leg, a girl from him on the breast-stroke, and a man completed the team by swimming the last two lengths on free-style. The other team followed the same plan, but in reverse.

Hamish was accustomed to pace the teams himself by swimming the eight lengths on free-style, and did so on this occasion. The exercise kept him in trim and spurred on the teams, who were determined some day to beat him.

When the training session was over, Hamish went straight to Henry, who was entertaining Rixie, Richard and a couple of girl discus-throwers to tea.

“Sit down, Jimmy, and have a cuppa. Plenty in the pot,” said Henry cordially.

“Oh, I didn’t come to gate-crash your tea-party,” said Hamish. “Just official business. It will keep.”

“Somebody been throwing out hints about Jonah?” asked Richard. “Is that the official business?”

“As a matter of fact, yes, in a vague sort of way.”

“There’s an arrangement for feeding rattlesnakes,” said Rixie. “I can tell you that much, if you want to know.”

“It was the mention of whales which intrigued me,” Hamish explained. “Is there any chance of history repeating itself? Is it arranged for Jonah to be spewed up before he perishes?”



The students remained silent.

"It isn't their pigeon," said Henry. "They have explained to me that they are not listed among the storm-tossed mariners who threw Jonah overboard, and therefore are loth to muscle in on somebody else's casting of lots. Have another piece of cake, Dick, old son."

"Thanks," said Richard, cutting himself a generous slice. "Fact is, we can't very well interfere, but we think the thing has gone far enough. The bloody so-and-so has been put away since early on Wednesday afternoon and now it's Thursday tea-time. *We* think it's time to call it off. Solitary confinement isn't much fun, you know, is it?"

"He's somewhere on the premises, then?"

"Can't tell you any more. There's a syndicate involved. We don't want to be roughed up by a pack of rude boys. I don't mind two or three, but I don't care for the idea of four of them sitting on me while two more get to work on my features with a razor-blade," said Richard.

"Same goes for me," said Rixie, "so—enough said. It's up to the beaks now. We've tipped Henry off. We can't do more."

"There appears to be a vestige of human feeling about you blokes, after all," said Hamish. "Are our features likely to be similarly decorated if we turn the place upside-down to look for the egregious Mr. Jones?"

"Couldn't say. Thanks for the tea, Harry boy. No leakage of how you came by your information, eh?" said Rixie.

"So far as I'm concerned, I have received no information. I shall announce at dinner tonight that there will be no gym for the men until Mr. Jones decides to return to his duties, then I shall lock the gym doors against unauthorized entry and suggest the gym blokes take to other activities, that's all," Henry promised him.

"Does 'the whale's belly' give you any ideas?" asked Hamish, when the students had gone.

"Not a sausage. I fancy it was the girls who nagged those two huskies into saying as much as they did."

"Yes, that might be so," said Hamish, "although I wouldn't have thought the girls had that much influence in what Damon Runyon would call this 'man's town'."

"Scarcity value," said Henry. "Eighteen of them as against eighty-two of the grosser sex, you know."

"Granted. All the same, doesn't it strike you that there are two rather rummy

aspects to all this?"

"Students are bound to break out occasionally."

"Yes, I know."

"Then how do you mean?"

"Oh, well, I told you, when first we met, that I had a suspicious mind, but look at what *you* told *me*."

"Can't remember. What was it?"

"You said that the students don't gang up on us. Well, it seems to me that they've ganged up on Jones, you know, and they ganged up on my predecessor, didn't they?"

"Only a few of them. Barry reports that he's been discharged from hospital—Merve, you know. Gassie won't have him back, though. He's persuaded Merve's uncle to give him a job in his steelworks. As for Jonah, well, he's been asking for trouble for years."

"Granted. But, having ganged up on him, why are some of the students so uneasy? I mean, you wouldn't say that my swimmers have much in common with Richard, who is a muscle man and operates the shot and occasionally the hammer, and Rixie, who's a discus man, would you?"

"I don't quite get your point."

"Look, it's what Celia is always getting at. The various squads here are not only in competition with other colleges and the big clubs and so forth; they are very much in competition with one another. That's why there's no real cohesion in Joynings. The College doesn't add up."

"So?"

"Well, it makes for our convenience in a great many ways, but it means that, in this case, the probable parking of Jones in something they refer to as the whale's belly has gone outside all their normal behaviour."

"I've answered that one. What the virtuous, such as you and me, couldn't have brought about—i.e., the complete fusion of all the warring sects in College—the egregious Jonah has accomplished simply by being just that shade above the odds which, even to our delinquent flock, makes all the difference."

"Possibly. I grant you that, but I return to my first point: why, having decided to banish Jones in this way, are some of them so uneasy? Apart from Richard, who's a sentimentalist, these kids are tough nuts. They must therefore have reason to be afraid of something. I really think we'd better find Jones, you know."

There was a long pause. Hamish, who had learned from Dame Beatrice, his

mother's employer and his own best friend, the value of silence, waited while Henry thought over what had been said.

"How long did the prototype remain in the whale's belly?" asked Henry suddenly.

"Three days and three nights, or so I seem to remember."

"Oh, well, then, we need not worry unduly. Jonah won't come to harm in that time if we don't manage to find him before Saturday morning. I expect they will count Wednesday, so that leaves the rest of today and all of Friday. They say they're feeding him, and that's the main thing. I think, you know, we may assume that Jonah will be at breakfast on Saturday morning or even at dinner, if he's lucky, tomorrow night."

"But supposing they've shut him up in some place where the oxygen is liable to give out? They may not have thought of that. I wonder who started the rumour that he'd resigned? Of course, I know it's a coverup by the students to account for his absence, but nobody has really swallowed it, so it didn't get them far."

"That's true enough, but you know what cuckoos they are. Well, your panic-warning about lack of oxygen has impressed me more than a little, so I do think perhaps it behoves us to look for the wretched fellow."

"When do we begin?"

"After lights-out. We'll give the halls of residence a good hour and a half, I think, before we up with our electric torches and have a scout round. You realize when all this must have taken place, don't you?"

"During the film, I suppose."

"I'm afraid so. Attendance at the show was optional, in any case, but, apart from that, it would have been easy enough for two or three of the chaps to slip out. The hall was in darkness and, anyway, people do drift in and out during a longish film, if only to visit the loo."

"Is it certain that Jones was in College during the film?"

"Well, he was present at lunch, if you remember, so I imagine he was on the premises later. At any rate, he helped me (to my great surprise, I must say) to supervise the clearing of the dining-hall and the setting-out of the chairs ready for the film-show, and that would have made it rather late for him to get to the pub. Besides, I think he had some plan to sit next to Lesley at the film, because I heard her telling him in no uncertain tone that she would be in the gym with her competition squad while the show was on, and wouldn't be attending it."

"Well, there's no doubt some of the hearties know where he is and have pressurized the lesser brethren into keeping quiet. I'm not concerned about his

diet, and if they're keeping him fed, they must be letting in a little air, but I do hope the lunatics haven't overdone the thing in other ways. He's a powerful chap, although he's gone to seed a bit, and I think they may have had to rough him up before they could get him put away," said Hamish.

"More than likely," Henry agreed. "Oh, well, I'll meet you outside your room at half-past twelve."

They separated. At half-past ten that night, Hamish, with two hours to get through before zero hour, composed a letter to his mother. In it he mentioned Jones's disappearance, putting this down to a students' rag, and added that he thought the College and its inhabitants would interest Dame Beatrice. Having addressed the letter and stamped it, he strolled downstairs to the College collecting-box which was just outside the front door, and put in his letter. Every member of staff possessed a front-door key, so, having closed the door behind him, he decided to go for a walk in the grounds, and began by taking a path towards the sports field.

He skirted the running-track and strolled towards the men's changing-rooms. He had been wondering where the students could have hidden Jones if he were still somewhere on the premises and, although he thought the choice of the changing-rooms would have been an unlikely one, he decided to make a reconnaissance.

It was dark by this time, but the summer night was full of stars. As he walked across the turf—for the changing-rooms had been put up on the side of the grounds furthest from the house but nearest to the halls of residence—he thought about the Warden and wondered, not for the first time, what that enigmatical man was really like. From Gascoigne Medlar his thoughts turned again to Jones. Even allowing for all the claims which close relationship—and was a brother-in-law so close a relative, after all?—it seemed strange that such a single-minded egoist as he judged Medlar to be should tolerate, at close quarters and for so long a time, the only person on the College staff who seemed bent on sabotage. How many of Jones's exploits could be put down to sheer but well-intentioned idiocy became more and more doubtful, but of his drinking-habits and the even more reprehensible actions to which his self-indulgence committed him, there seemed no reasonable doubt. Medlar's continued toleration of him seemed remarkable enough to be mysterious unless (again it occurred to Hamish) Jones was in a position to blackmail the Warden.

The changing-rooms, brick-built and commodious, stood out against a background of glimmering sky and the pale wreaths of the stars. Hamish walked

up to the window and called Jones by name. There was neither answer nor any sound of movement from within the building. He walked all the way round it, tapping on the walls and doors and continuing to call out, "Jones! I say! Are you there, Jones?" But, like the lonely traveller in the poem, he called out in vain. In the starlight the building stood silent and apparently deserted. The men-students had keys to the cupboards, but the only key to the outside doors must be with the head groundsman. Hamish trotted back to the main building to keep his appointment with Henry.

"I've tried the changing-rooms," he said, when they met. "It was a pretty long shot, but I just thought they might have shut him up in one of those big cupboards. I hadn't a key, but I walked all the way round and hammered and shouted. I didn't get any reply, but, of course, if he was shut away like that, he might have passed out, I suppose."

"Oh," said Henry, "I shouldn't think he would. All those cupboards have ventilation holes in the doors. He wouldn't suffocate. No, if you didn't get any reply, he isn't there. It would be too obvious a hiding-place, anyway. Besides, the groundsman has a cupboard and a locker there. He'd have found him and let him out before this. Well, have you any other ideas? You're nearer in age to the students than I am. Where would be a likely place to start? What are they likely to have thought of?"

"The whale's belly," said Hamish. "You know, Henry, I seem to think that must be more than merely a *fanciful* way of describing Jones's prison. Can't you think of any place which might fit the reference? To my mind, under the ground seems likelier than above it. Isn't there a cellar, or something of the sort, attached to this house?"

"A cellar..." Henry considered the suggestion. "There's a wine-cellar, but nobody except Gassie and the butler have access to that."

"Well, it's not an old enough house to have a priest's room or secret passages, so there's no problem there."

"I'll tell you what there is, now I come to think of it," said Henry. "There's the underground installation for the central heating. I wonder whether they can have thought of that? It's known to the College as the stoke-hole. That might fit the bill if they could get hold of the key."

"How does one get to it?"

"Well, there's a kind of janitor who looks after it. Access to it is by what looks like a half-door, with a tiny round-headed window, in the wall round by the kitchens, It's down a steep step. I went in once with Jackson—that's the janitor

fellow—and he showed me round. I believe you may have hit on the very place, although I'm surprised the students should have known how to gain access to it. Well, one thing: if Jonah is down there he'll be all right. It's warm and dry, and there must be plenty of ventilation because Jackson has a sort of cubby-hole down there and uses it quite a lot in winter weather, he informed me. There's an armchair—basket-work, with cushions—and a primus stove and a food cupboard—all modern conveniences, so to speak."

"Well, shall we go and take a look?"

"Have to wait until I can get the key off Jackson tomorrow morning before we can get in, I'm afraid, but we could go to the doorway and speak. I don't suppose the door is soundproof, so at least we may be able to establish whether Jones is there or not."

"Could Jones have been down there for a couple of days without Jackson finding him, though?"

"Oh, yes. Jackson wouldn't go down there in this weather. Let's make a recce and take a butchers."

As they had keys to the front door, they let themselves out that way and walked round the side of the mansion towards the kitchen regions. When they were under the pantry window, Henry switched on a torch and played the spotlight from it over the surrounding brickwork. A couple of yards further on, Hamish saw the round-headed glass in the half-door which Henry had mentioned. They pushed at the door and tried to rattle it, but it was well-fitted and did not budge. Hamish descended the step, knelt on the narrow stone doorsill, put his lips close to the key-hole and called out Jones's name, but there was no response. Then Henry tried. His voice boomed back at him, but that was all.

"There's no supervision in the halls of residence, is there?" asked Hamish, as Henry stood up.

"No, and to those I *do* have a key. We shan't be popular if we go invading them at this time of night, though. Much better wait until the huts are empty tomorrow morning. Not that I think they'll have hidden him there. Servants go in to clean up and make the beds and collect the laundry, you know, and there's an odd-job fellow who empties waste-paper baskets and cleans boots and shoes."

"The servants could be squared, perhaps."

"By penniless students?"

"Well, *scared* into keeping quiet, then."

"Possibly. All right, we'll take a look round while the chaps are having

breakfast. Is there anywhere else you can think of?”

“Well, he would hardly have been hidden in the room of one of the girls, but what about trying the attics?”

“The girls’ rooms?” said Henry thoughtfully. “You know, you may have hit on something there. It’s quite clear that the women students are in on the rag. It’s also fairly certain that they’re nervous about it. It’s true that most of the lasses hate old Jonah like poison, but there are one or two types who might take a pop at him and think the fun and games worthwhile. His prowess with Bertha may have given the hussies—and we’ve got our share of them—a bit of a kick.”

“Isn’t there the same objection, though?”

“How do you mean?”

“The servant problem.”

“No, as it happens, there isn’t. The girls are supposed to make their own beds and keep their rooms tidy.”

“What about their laundry, though?”

“They wash and iron their own bits of frippery and just chuck their bed-linen and so forth outside their bedroom doors every Thursday morning. I believe Miss Yale does an occasional inspection of rooms, but she always gives warning of her visits, so the girls are never taken on the hop. I really think, you know, James, that I’ll go and rake her out and suggest she does a round-up. If there’s anything scandalous going on, I think we should nip it in the bud.”

“I should think Miss Yale would nip *us* in the bud, if we go disturbing her at one o’clock in the morning.”

“Not she. Come along. Let’s chance it.”

Miss Yale’s large bed-sitter had a fanlight over the door and they could see that her light was on. Henry tapped and they waited. There was no invitation to them to enter, but after a few moments Miss Yale opened the door.

“Oh, it’s you two,” she said. “Come in. Sorry to have kept you waiting, but thought I’d better hide my chunk of porn in case it was one of the hussies. What can I do for you? If you’re looking for Jonah, try elsewhere. I haven’t got him.”

“How did you guess we were looking for Jonah?” Henry enquired, closing the door behind himself and Hamish.

“Spotted you snooping round the house. No luck, I suppose?”

“We’ve tried the changing-rooms and the stoke-hole,” said Hamish, “but haven’t found him.”

“I suppose you’ve tried his own room to make sure they haven’t trussed him up and bundled him into his own wardrobe or somewhere?”

“We wondered,” said Henry, with some diffidence, “whether, while we do that, you could make sure that none of your young ladies is giving him her hospitality.”

“Think it’s likely? *I* don’t. I’ll go the rounds, if you like, but it won’t be any help. Good thing I hadn’t gone to bed. You push along to Jonah’s quarters, then, and I’ll give the girls’ rooms the once-over. They are three to a room, so it won’t take me all that long.”

“Not much privacy for the girls, then,” said Hamish, when they had inspected Jones’s two splendid rooms and had assured themselves that he was not in residence or captivity there.

“Oh, they can curtain all the rooms into cubicles, I believe,” said Henry. “They probably like it quite well. Lots of delinquent girls are definitely gregarious, curiously enough. In fact, I would say that our young women are far more homogeneous than the men.”

Miss Yale returned at the end of twenty-five minutes.

“Nothing doing,” she reported. “A few cases of incipient lesbianism, but nothing more. They get lonely, you know, and as they can’t co-habit with the men, what can you expect? After all, they’re in prison here, poor little stinkers.” With this sympathetic pronouncement she said goodnight and closed her door.

“Now for the attics,” said Henry. But in the attics they drew blank once more. “Well, we shall have to give it up for tonight,” he added at last, “but in the morning I’ll inspect the halls of residence, just to leave no stone unturned, and get keys to the changing-rooms. I’m beginning not to like the look of things, and that’s a fact.”



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## CHAPTER 5

### Interviews



Well,” said Henry on the following morning, “there seems to be nobody in the stoke-hole, or anywhere else we thought of. If Jones doesn’t turn up at lunch I shall speak to Gassie and get him to utter threats.”

“What sort of threats?” asked Hamish.

“That is up to him. Expulsion of ringleaders, I suppose, although I do hope it won’t really come to that. The threat may be sufficient to bring them to their senses.”

“Who *are* the ringleaders?”

“One can do no more than guess, at this juncture. After all, there are those among us who have grievances, are there not?”

“Yes, but the chief sufferers from Jones’s machinations are still in hospital.”

“How do we know they’re the chief ones? There may be others. In fact, we know there are.”

“Good Lord! You don’t suppose Barry or Lesley would be a party to a student rag, do you?”

“No, of course not. Anyway, we’ll hope to goodness Jones shows up at lunch, that’s all.”

Jones was not at lunch. Henry, looking worried, left his seat at the high table, got out his car and drove to the village to make certain that the missing man had not decided upon a snack and a drink at the public-house which was his frequent haven. He drew blank, as he had expected to do, returned to College and caught up, as best he could, with his meal.

The students were unusually quiet. Such talk as went on was in undertones. There was an air of conspiracy about the place.

“Have you been to see Gassie? Does he know that Jonah is still missing?” Hamish asked when Henry had re-seated himself at the high table.

“I’m going to see him directly after lunch. I’m beginning to hope that the students will have freed Jones and that he’s decided to sling his hook, after all.

There *was* that rumour, you know, that he had resigned.”

“I thought it had been scotched, and by Medlar himself.”

“I know. And, of course, Gassie, I feel certain, would be loth to ask Jonah to go. I have an idea that, apart from being his brother-in-law, Jones has some special reason for having earned Gassie’s gratitude. What it is I don’t know and should never attempt to find out, but, shortly before you came, Miss Yale and I made representations to him to get rid of the mischievous, unpleasant fellow. Some of the women students had tackled us about his little ways, you know. It was then that Gassie told me privately that he owed Jones a living and could never sufficiently indulge him for something he had done for him in the past. Personally, I cannot visualize Jones’s doing anything for anybody unless he had to, but one never knows, of course, and therefore one should not judge, I suppose.”

He was about to rise from the table to pronounce the customary Latin grace when Richard, flushed and sweating, came up to the high table and said,

“Would you make an announcement, Harry boy?”

“Now?” asked Henry.

“Well, everybody seems to be here except Gassie.”

“And Jonah,” said Henry, glancing towards Jones’s vacant chair.

“Well, that’s it,” said Richard. “They shoved Jonah down the stoke-hole. We’ve just been along to get him out. He isn’t there. They didn’t leave him any more grub after yesterday, so you might ask the chaps who’ve moved him whether they’ve fed him or not. Nobody wants the poor poop to starve to death.”

“I think you’d better speak to Mr. Medlar,” said Henry formally, “but, as he isn’t at lunch, I’ll make an announcement if you like.” He rose and tapped on the table. “Look,” he said to the students, “a joke’s all right, but it might be as well to produce Jonah and let him eat. No questions will be asked, provided he makes his reappearance immediately this meal is over. *Benedicam dominum. Amen.*”

There was a stir among the students and a girl called out, “Nobody here knows where Jonah is. There were six of us in it. We’re prepared to give you our names. Nobody else is involved. We intended to let him out last night after dinner, but when we went along he wasn’t there.”

“He was there up to tea-time yesterday,” said a boy, leaving his place and walking round to stand beside the girl. “I spoke to him and told him all the reasons why we’d dealt with him, and I let him know when he’d be released. He couldn’t possibly have freed himself. He cursed me pretty much, but he was perfectly all right, I’m sure of that. And none of us knows what happened to

him.”

“The people concerned must come to my room,” said Henry. “Come now, at once, please, before you go on to the field.”

The six students who entered Henry’s lecture-room consisted of the youth and the girl who had spoken in hall and four other young men. Henry civilly requested them to be seated and they took the three desks in front of his dais and the three immediately behind these.

“Well, now,” he said, “who wants to speak first?”

“Ladies first,” said one of the men.

“Kathleen, isn’t it?” said Henry. “Right. Fire away.”

“Well, we’re the committee,” she said. “We had a mass meeting after Colin got hurt. There was a lot of feeling about it.”

“A vote was taken,” said one of the boys, “and it was decided that something must be done about Jonah.”

“So various people got up and made suggestions,” put in another youth, “and the one that got the most votes was this belly-of-the-whale thing because it seemed appropriate and it sort of appealed to people.” He turned to a young man behind him. “Go on. Your turn. We’re all in on this.”

“Right, then. Well, it seemed a committee—an action committee—was called for, and the six of us were voted on to it. We only wanted one girl because of the rough stuff, Jonah being a gorilla when forced to defend himself.”

“It was a free vote,” said another boy in the second row, “but volunteers were called for who would be willing to serve, and there was a big response from the men.”

“Less from the girls, of course,” said the last to speak, “but that’s only natural. So everybody voted and the six of us were in. It was thought better not to have more than five men, because otherwise we’d only get in each other’s way.”

“And the lady? What was her part to be?” asked Henry. Hamish, who had accompanied him with some idea of helping him if the students got out of hand, admired his attitude of grave and non-committal interest.

“Well, rather important,” said the girl. “Somebody had to get the key out of Jackson’s cottage, so while Bill, John and Julian got Jackson out of the way by asking him to come and hold the stop-watch while they did a five thousand metres run...”

“Nearly killed us, incidentally,” put in Bill, “but we knew we’d better allow Kath a quarter of an hour to do her stuff, and even more if we could manage

it...”

“So we strolled over to the track with Jackson. He’ll always hold the watch if he’s off duty and there’s no coach or one of the chaps or girls available,” said John. “And we took our time about changing down, and putting our spikes on, and warming up, and all that...”

“You shouldn’t have changed down until you’d warmed up in your track suits and were ready to begin the race,” said Henry. “You know that.”

“Oh, that’s all right, Harry boy,” said Julian. “We’ll remember. Well, then we stationed Jackson and started off, telling him to watch the lap times. That was just to give him something to think about, because his cottage, although a long way off, stands in the open and is visible from the running-track, and we didn’t want him to notice what Kath was up to.”

“It was my job to get busy on Mrs Jackson and get her out of the cottage, too, while Benjy and Shaun sneaked the stoke-hole key,” put in Kathleen, “that was the tricky bit. She’s a simple soul, like Jackson himself, though, so I asked her whether she’d counted her chickens that morning, because I was pretty certain I’d heard a fox bark in the night.”

“She fell for it all right,” said Benjy, “and the key, with its label, was hanging just inside the back-door next to the roller towel. We’d prepared a substitute key, of course—my Jewish intelligence thought of that; it was the key to my cupboard in the changing room, as a matter of fact, so I knew it wouldn’t be missed—we’re always losing them—and there we were.”

“Your film, Harry boy, was a godsend,” said Julian. “As soon as you announced when it was to be, we put Exercise Key in motion and the five of us waited to find out whether Jonah was going in to see the film, although we guessed rightly that he’d take the time off; so when he went round to the staff garages for his car, we collected him and took him along to the stoke-hole and bunged him in.”

“You’ve forgotten one thing, haven’t you?” asked Henry. The five men looked stolidly at him. The girl caught her breath and said, “No, I don’t think so. That’s the way it went, but now...”

“Now you can’t find him. Did you ever return the key to Jackson?”

“Of course not. We needed to hang on to it because we knew we were going to let Jonah out last night, as I told you in hall,” said Kathleen, “but when we went along, he wasn’t there.”

“I don’t see why you feel so worried. Somebody else must have let him out,” said Henry.

“How could they, when we’ve got the only key?” demanded Bill.

“How do you know you’ve got the only key? It is most unlikely that there would be only one key to such an important place as the stoke-hole, as you fellows call it. A nice pass we should all come to during the winter, if the one and only key happened to get lost. Of course there are other keys. There must be.”

“Well, supposing there are, and somebody got hold of one, what happened to Jonah? That’s what we’re worried about,” said Kathleen. “You see, he doesn’t seem to be anywhere about the place and yet his car is still here.”

“Oh?” said Henry, who had not thought of this. “Sure it’s his car? Oh, well, yes, you’d know, I suppose, although I *don’t* know how you expected to acquire access to any of the staff lock-ups.”

“Easy,” said John. “We followed Jonah, on the day of the film, round to the garages and when we’d got him impounded, we frisked him and pinched the key to his lock-up. That’s where we first thought of putting him, only we thought he’d make enough row for someone to hear him.”

“Well, you’d better give me the key.”

John walked up to the dais and handed the little key to Henry, remarking as he did so, “You needn’t worry, Harry boy. We couldn’t have gone joy-riding or anything. There’s only enough petrol in the car to get as far as the village. He hadn’t tanked up.”

“Probably intended to do that at the pub,” said Julian. “Here’s the key to the stoke-hole. You’d better have that as well.”

“Well, I’ll look into the matter with Gassie,” said Henry.

“No names, no pack-drill, of course. That’s understood.”

“What’s *really* worrying them?” asked Hamish, when the students had departed.

“My guess would be that the grape-vine has failed them. They honestly don’t know where Jonah is. That’s what’s the trouble, I fancy. This particular half-dozen have nothing more against him than lots of the others. I think they’re dead scared that someone *has* really laid for him, you know. What’s more, I think they must have something to go on. That’s why they’re in such a panic.”

“You don’t really think some misguided person has gone too far, do you?” asked Hamish. “Or could it be—yes, it would have to be—more than one? Jones, I mean—”

“Yes, I see what you mean,” said Henry, looking anxious. “It’s true that Jones is a powerful fellow. He’d have gone berserk when they let him out, so

they may have—”

“Richard is the heftiest chap in the place, but I don’t think he had anything to do with it,” said Hamish. “He’s a guileless soul and I’m sure would have given himself away long before this if he’d had a hand in any lethal kind of rough stuff. Besides, he’s never had any particular cause to dislike Jones, has he?”

“No, but he’s a chivalrous sort of young thug, and might well take up the cudgels on behalf of somebody else,” Henry argued. “I happen to know, for example, that he has a great admiration for Lesley. If he considered her wronged, he might go to all lengths on her behalf, and we know that he came to Joynings with a reputation for violence. Still, as you say, he is a transparent person and would easily have been detected by those six we saw just now if he had released their prisoner and spirited him away—or something worse.”

“That’s the rub, isn’t it?”

“The fact that Jones has disappeared again? Yes, indeed it is.”

“When are you going to speak to Medlar?”

“I wondered whether we ought to institute another search before I do that. Jones—or his body—must be somewhere about. I think I will organize parties to comb the woods.”

“Well, I’ve at least an hour to spare before I need go to the pool. My squad can’t swim until they’ve digested their lunch. And that’s another thing. Don’t you think we ought to put our best athletes on some sort of a diet? My lot eat the same sort of food as everybody else. I’d like to see more steak and fewer fatteners.”

“I’ll look into it, but I’m not sure whether it would be popular to segregate the stars from the also-rans in that sort of way. Both sides might envy the other, don’t you think? I know Gassie is the pot-hunter of all pot-hunters, but I’d rather keep the lid on the pot—no awkward pun intended—than have it boil over on a question of food. Still, I’ll certainly bear it in mind, if you think it’s a good idea.”

“So, about this business of combing the woods; how do we get it organized?”

“If you’ll get Miss Yale to find out whether the women want to take part, I’ll go round the halls and collect a couple of dozen volunteers from among the men.”

“Suppose the first to volunteer are the chaps who actually know where Jones is?”

“I think we must chance that. They themselves may be relieved to have him found. The rag, if that’s all it is, has gone much too far by this time, and even the most vindictive must have realized it. If you are willing to help...”

“I’m sure Martin and Jerry will come, too.”

“Oh, good. Get hold of them, then, before you go to Miss Yale.”

Hamish found Miss Yale, Lesley, and a couple of women students still at after-lunch coffee in Miss Yale’s quarters. She refused point-blank to organize a band of searchers from among the women students. “The woods are out of bounds for them,” she said significantly.

Hamish was on his way back to the tennis courts, which had been chosen as the meeting-place for the volunteer searchers while they got their briefing, when he was waylaid by one of the servants.

“If you’re not busy at the moment, sir, the Warden would like you to see him.”

“Oh, in that case, go out to the tennis courts, Maisie, and, when Mr. Henry turns up, tell him I’ve got to see the Warden and will join him as soon as I can, but not to wait for me.” He could not think of any reason why Medlar should want to see him, but, accustomed and schooled to polite and instant obedience to authority, he climbed the magnificent staircase and passed along the balustraded gallery to the Warden’s study.

“Oh, James, my dear fellow,” said Gascoigne, when the young man presented himself, “did you ever get that cataloguing done?”

“Certainly, sir. The book is hanging in its case from a hook in the ante-room. There were several items which had not been listed in the previous catalogue, so I added them in what appeared to be the appropriate places. I hope that accords with your wishes?”

“Thank you, my dear fellow, thank you. Well, if you are sure that you have listed everything, I wonder whether we might check the items against your catalogue? Not that I think you will have missed anything, but just as—well, just as a check, so to speak.”

“There is a good hour before I am due at the pool, sir. The swimming squad have to digest their lunch, so, if it would be convenient for you, I could check with you at once.” (It would take a quarter of an hour, he thought, for Henry to collect volunteers.)

“That is extremely good of you, James. Let us begin, then. I cannot think it will take us very long. It is very kind of you to give up your time to my hobby.”

Hamish had noticed, as the term went on, a growing cordiality in the Warden’s manner towards him. He was not conscious of having done anything special to win Gascoigne’s approval and could only conclude that the man must have got wind of his close association, through his mother, with Dame Beatrice

Lestrangle Bradley. However, he murmured a polite and modest disclaimer that he was showing kindness to the Warden and followed him into the ante-room, where Gascoigne switched on the light and picked up the new catalogue which Hamish had written in Italianate script picked out with suitable, picturesque rubrics.

“Charming! Charming! Really, my dear James, you must have spent a great deal of your leisure-time on this extremely beautiful manuscript,” said Gascoigne.

“A pleasure, sir, I assure you. If you will read aloud, I will identify the objects as we come to them. I think I can remember where I placed each one.”

“Methodical in the extreme, James. By all means let us begin.”

One item, and one only, was missing from the tally.

“Strange,” said Hamish. “I know the javelin was here when I made my list. I remember noticing it particularly. I even remember exactly where I placed it.”

“Strange,” said the Warden. “Even the maid who dusts and polishes is only allowed in here under my own direct supervision. I suppose you have never inadvertently left the key in the lock when you vacated this room?”

“I have only been in the room twice, except for the time when you yourself introduced me to your museum at the beginning of term, sir, and you will remember that I handed you back the key each evening after I had made my list. I can assure you that the key was never otherwise out of my possession.”

“Of course not. Well, no doubt we have students here who are quite capable of picking a lock. Whoever it was must have had hopes of getting his hands on something of intrinsic value, I suppose. There are solid silver cups among the collection. In his disappointment at finding that everything valuable (in that sense) had been placed in the safe, I suppose he impounded the javelin as an act of defiance. A strange item to choose, but some of the people here are not very well-balanced, I’m afraid. If they were, the chances are that they would not be here, of course. Oh, well, I must look into the matter, I suppose. What a nuisance it all is!”

“Have I your permission to go, sir? I am due down at the pool fairly shortly.”

“Oh, by all means, my dear fellow. I may say, James, that I am delighted with the way you have taken to your duties here.”

“Thank you, sir. They are very pleasant ones.”

“You would not think of changing your plans and joining us on a permanent basis, I suppose?”

“You are very kind, sir, but I fear my mamma would oppose the scheme. She



has set her heart on the diplomatic service for me, and I should not wish—in fact, between ourselves, I should not dare—to thwart her.” (When she read this preposterous statement later on in a letter which her son wrote to her, Laura Gavin laughed sardonically).

From outside the Warden’s office Hamish dashed downstairs and out on to the field. He was more than anxious to find out what had happened to Jones. The fact that the Warden’s javelin was missing disquieted him more than a little, although he could hardly imagine that it was dangerous enough to become a lethal weapon.

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## CHAPTER 6

### Joynings jumps the Gun



Henry had not yet collected his search party. The College enjoyed its after-lunch break and was disinclined to go roaming the woods on what the majority thought would be a fool's errand.

"Who wants to find bloody Jonah, anyway? Good riddance if he *has* gone," was the consensus of opinion. Hamish, faced with this conclusion, left the tennis courts and went on to the field where the gymnasts, singly or in small groups, were stretched out in the sunshine, secure in the knowledge that for them there would be no class that afternoon. He spoke crisply to one and another.

"You a gym man? Well, there's no gym this afternoon, so go on to the tennis courts and report to Henry. Why? Because I shall scrag you if you don't."

As the gymnasts, on the whole, tended to be small-boned and amenable rather than hefty and belligerent, this policy worked well, particularly as the men's gym squad, owing to Jones's slackness, were known to be lethargic and out of condition. They grouched and slouched, but they obeyed. Henry addressed them.

"You'll be looking for Jonah. He may be injured. He must be found. I'd rather we found him than the police. That's all. We'll quarter the woods inch by inch. It shouldn't take long." He indicated a heap of hockey sticks which some of the girls had been asked to bring over from their games shed. "These will help you to prod the undergrowth and shove brambles out of your way, and all that. Shout out if you find him or if you find anything which will help us to trace him. If he's hurt, of course don't attempt to move him. O.K.? Off we go, then."

"Do you think there are enough of us to search the woods thoroughly, Henry?" asked a slim youth wearing a singlet and grey flannels. "When I've seen films where the police do it, they fan out and beat every bit of bracken."

"Trouble is that everybody except you blokes has a coaching session in about half-an-hour's time, Gil."

"What about the long-jump squad, then? There's been a sort of hoodoo

placed on the pit since Colin's accident and what with Barry being on leave until recently, and all that. Why shouldn't *they* be given something to do, as well as *us*?"

"Barry is going to give them a blackboard lecture with slides of Klaus Beer, Ralph Boston and Lynn Davies—oh, and Mary Rand and Viorica Viscopoleanu, of course. I'm afraid Barry is not very keen on using the pit even yet. He can't get over Colin's accident, any more than the long-jump squad can. You cut along and start looking for Jonah, and don't worry about the long-jump fellows."

"It's a bit morbid of Barry, don't you think, to boycott the pit like this?" asked Hamish, as he and Henry cantered after the students. "After all, accidents do happen, and Colin seems to be going on all right."

"Barry will get himself sorted out in time. He's very fond of Colin, you know. Besides, he blames himself for the accident in the most unreasonable way. Says that if he hadn't gone on leave, the thing would never have happened. Well, of course it wouldn't, but you can't argue in that sort of way."

"How thoroughly do you think this lot will search?" asked Hamish, as they caught up with the last of the gymnasts and passed them.

"I don't think they'll put themselves out, but the woods are not very extensive. We'd better separate, I think. You take the left side and I'll do the rest. How much time can you spare?"

"Not a lot, I'm afraid. Got a swim-session with some learners. I want everybody in College to be able to swim."

"All right, then. Do you know that old hut in the clearing?"

"No, but I can find it."

"All right. Take that path there. It leads to it. If the hut seems to be locked, kick it in. The timbers are sure to be rotten."

"If it's locked, Jones can't be there."

"Somebody may have a key. They got one to the stoke-hole, remember."

Hamish found the hut. It was locked, but he had no difficulty in kicking in two or three boards and entering the musty premises. There were two rooms. The building must have been a temporary shelter for a gamekeeper when the estate had been in private hands. Hamish looked around. The rooms were bare, except for cobwebs, and smelt damp. There was no sign of Jones. On his way out of the woods he encountered Henry again.

"Not in the hut," he said.

"No? It was just a possibility," said Henry. "We haven't had any luck, either. Well, I'm going to leave the students to it now. I feel I've shown willing and I

ought to be back in College in case Gassie wants me. Miss Yale has just met me and mentioned the stoke-hole, so I think I'll take another look at it just in case there's another something which I've overlooked."

"*Another* something? How do you mean?"

"Well, it turns out that there is another key. It belongs to Miss Yale and hangs up just inside her door with one or two other of her keys. She says it isn't there now and she can't remember when she saw it last. She came to tell me."

"Oh, dear! Well, if Jones has been removed from the stoke-hole —and it seems he has — where on earth can they have put him? That's if he hasn't slung his hook off his own bat. He may well have done so, you know. I mean, don't you think that, if the students did manhandle him a bit and then some of them let him go, he may have got wind up and decided that enough is enough? This business of Miss Yale's key may be significant, don't you see. I mean, another lot of students might have known it was there, let him out with it and threatened that it might be worse for him next time."

"Well, it could be so, I suppose, but, in view of his car's still being here, I don't think it's very likely. I agree that somebody in the know, but not one of the six who came along to confess, must have swiped Miss Yale's key, taken Jones out of storage and put him somewhere else, but it's only speculation."

"Who is the somebody? And where, as I say, could they have put him if the students don't find him in the woods?"

"Well," said Henry, "I don't know either answer and I don't really want to name names, but Barry has been brooding more than a bit since he knew of Colin's accident. Then there's Lesley. She and Barry between then could account for Jones, I think. He's big, but he's flabby and, apart from that, if Lesley really got busy with that sandbag thing at the end of the indoor jumping-rope and connected it with Jonah's head, if you see what I mean..."

"She wouldn't really commit actual bodily harm, though, would she? Girls don't, you know."

"Don't they? She's talked pretty wildly, anyway. Still, I noticed this morning that her two invalids are among us again and looking none the worse, so perhaps she has cooled off by now."

"Here's hoping," said Hamish. "Well, I'd better leave you. I've promised some beginners a tutorial in the indoor pool, as I told you, and I don't want them drowning one another before I get there."

"You're too conscientious by half," said Henry.

"Look who's talking!" said Hamish.

He found his beginners skirmishing about in the shallow end, ordered them out of the water and gave them a short demonstration of free-style swimming which was sardonically applauded. As he swung himself up out of the water a girl came out of one of the cubicles.

"I say, Jimmy," she observed, "guess what!"

"My guess is that you're late for class, but think nothing of it. I'm paid a great deal of money for putting up with little slackers like you," said Hamish. "Get in, all of you—*jump*! No crawling down the steps."

"No, but listen, Jimmy," protested the girl.

"No time," said Hamish. "Get in, all of you, and take hold of those crawl-boards you see at the shallow end. Arms at full stretch. Free-style kick, and count One, Two, Three, One, Two, Three, until I tell you to stop. Like this." He dived in again and demonstrated. There was more sardonic applause as he heaved himself out on to the side.

"No, but, listen, Jamesy," persisted the youngster, "it's so peculiar. You *must* come. You *must*. It might be terribly important."

Hamish looked at her and decided that she was in earnest.

"If you're pulling my leg, young woman," he said, "you'll be in trouble."

"No, really! You *must* come. I've found something horrid in my cubicle."

"Oh, Lord!" thought Hamish, following her along the warm tiles. "How big is it?" he asked, thinking of Jones. However, had it been Jones, she would probably have screamed the place down, he reflected.

"Well, it's not *big*, exactly," said the girl. "More kind of long and thin, actually."

"Can you carry it?"

"Oh, well, yes, but I don't like the idea of touching it."

"Very well. Get into the water with the others."

"Oh, but it's my find! I want to show it you."

"Get into the water, or I'll throw you in at the deep end and leave you to drown." He made a threatening gesture which sent her screaming away. Then he entered the cubicle, which was electrically lighted. The girl was right in two respects.

The object which was standing in one corner of the tiny room was certainly portable. It was a javelin. It was also important, for the binding at the hand-grip was dark red and looked sticky.

Hamish did not touch the javelin. He came out of the cubicle and went to the telephone in the instructor's dressing-room. He asked for Henry.

“Look,” he said, “can you come over to the indoor pool?” Having received Henry’s assurance, he went back to his squad of learners and worked them hard until Henry appeared.

“What’s up?” Henry asked. “Drowned somebody?”

“No. Come and see whether you see what I and that little horror Cynthia have seen. If you do, the matter may be very awkward.”

“How do you mean?”

“I don’t mean anything. Does anybody in the College know a butcher?”

“A butcher?”

Hamish led him to the cubicle and showed him the javelin.

“It struck me,” he said, “that one of our bright young lads might have amused himself by doing a bit of horror-faking, that’s all. What I’d like to know is how he got hold of the javelin.”

“There are a dozen in the sports cupboard.”

“None of them has an inscription, though, has it?” He indicated some chased lettering on a small silver plate affixed to a ring just below the binding of the grip on the javelin. “In my opinion, this belongs to Medlar. It must be the javelin which has disappeared from his collection. We both checked and it isn’t any longer among the trophies.”

“We’d better have him over, then. He ought to be in on this.”

While Hamish went back to the swimmers, Henry brought Gascoigne over and showed him the javelin. “And I wouldn’t touch it,” he said. “Fingerprints, you know.”

“Poppycock!” said Gascoigne. “Fingerprints have no value unless they are on record at a police station. However, I have no intention of touching the messy object. My opinion is that some practical joker has been daubing my javelin with red paint.”

“Oh, you recognize it as your javelin, do you? James has identified it, too, so I suppose it must be yours.”

“Certainly. If you look, you can see the inscription I had put on it. All the museum objects are inscribed or numbered. I wish I knew who has managed to gain access to the museum, though. The key has never been out of my possession except those days, some weeks ago, when James had it to catalogue the collection. He seems certain that none of the students could have obtained possession of the key, but people are always certain about that kind of thing. I must speak to him again.”

“Well, he’s here if you want him,” said Henry. “Incidentally, I’ve seen the

students whom I set to searching the woods. There is no sign of Jonah.” He walked along the side of the bath to where Hamish was giving instruction. “Gassie craves a word,” he said.

Hamish ordered his learners out of the water and waylaid the girl Cynthia.

“Get your things out of your cubicle and find another one in which to dress,” he said. “I suppose it’s too much to ask you to keep quiet about what you’ve found?”

“Don’t touch the javelin,” said Gascoigne, as the girl prepared to enter the cubicle. “Just pick up your things and run along. I hope you are not the culprit who took the javelin from my museum?”

“I was sent here for running away from home, not for shoplifting, Gassie darling,” said the girl pertly.

At the high table that evening Jones’s chair was empty again. Hamish caught Henry casting an anxious glance at it. The students, too, seemed to be eyeing it. There was a subdued air about the dining-hall and voices were kept low. Gascoigne ate his dinner in almost complete silence and did not favour the senior common room with his presence at coffee after the meal.

“I’ve been on to him,” said Henry, when the Warden’s absence received comment from the others. “I’ve told him it’s more than time he called in the police to trace Jonah. Naturally he doesn’t want to, but now this javelin has been found, I don’t think he’s got any option. I don’t like this mysterious business. Jonah wasn’t popular, to say the least, and we’ve got more than one homicidal character on the premises. While Gassie is chewing things over, I want one of you to come with me to have a look round Jones’s quarters. I think I’d like a witness, in case he’s left any clue as to his whereabouts. I don’t care for the look of things at all, and I’m making no secret of the fact. I want an absolutely unbiased witness, so, James, I’d like you to accompany me.”

“Wouldn’t Medlar... ?” began Hamish.

“I’d sooner have you.”

Together they went to Jones’s rooms. Unlike the rest of the staff, he had been given a sitting-room as well as a bedroom and both were beautifully furnished.

“Plushy,” said Hamish. “All brother-in-lawly love, I take it.”

“I suppose so. I’ll look through the bureau if you’ll turn out the cupboard.”

They searched the sitting-room and then went into the bedroom. Apart from a good many empty bottles under the bed and some lively photographs under the clean shirts, there was little to indicate an individual taste or a positive personality. There were no letters and no unpaid bills, but neither did anything

indicate that Jones might have packed up and taken an unceremonious departure. Henry and Hamish gave up their search and went to Henry's own room. He made coffee and produced a bottle of brandy.

"I talked very seriously to Gassie this evening just before dinner," he said.

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him everything, beginning with the clues the students had given us and the interview we'd had with the committee—the Rag Committee, I suppose they'd call themselves. I told him of the search we'd made, and I impressed on him—or tried to—that the students themselves weren't happy about Jonah's disappearance."

"What did he say to that?"

"Well, he admitted it was worrying. He also said that he'd been in contact with one or two of the local farmers to ask whether there had been any complaints of animals being killed, but he had rounded up no information."

"Rather a strange thing to have done, surely?"

"Oh, no, not really. We have had complaints—few and far between, I must admit—but it's not unknown for some of our bold spirits to raid a farm for sucking pigs. Then they have a barbecue, you know—that sort of thing. He was thinking of that messy javelin, of course. In spite of talking about red paint, he thinks there might be blood on it, you know."

"I gather, from what you said about pigs, that the farmers wouldn't be altogether surprised to get his enquiry?"

"Not at all surprised, and he's well in with them because, if there ever have been complaints, he has provided very generous compensation."

"To keep the thing out of the hands of the police, I suppose."

"Yes, that's it. It is one of his proudest boasts that none of the students has ever been in trouble with the law. That's why the parents have so much confidence in him. As for Jonah's disappearance, he said the chances were that he'd simply slung his hook, feeling that the students had had enough of him. I wish I still thought that was the case, but there's something else—something I shall have to mention to Gassie. You remember we got paid on Wednesday morning? Well, in his bureau I found Jonah's cheque, and a whacking big one it is. You see the point: it hasn't been paid in. If he'd really slung his hook, he wouldn't leave money behind. Well, I've told them to bring round my car. Could you spare time to accompany me to the pub? I tried it before, so I don't think it will be the slightest bit of use, but Gassie suggested it, so I think perhaps..."

It was half-past nine when they reached the village. The night was clouded



over and the stars were hidden. From the pub bright lights shone out on to the road and there came the hum of many voices, sounds of laughter and, as Hamish and Henry entered the bar, the sharpish plop of darts and the clink of glasses. The pub was crowded and the landlord and his barmaid were at full pressure.

Henry wormed his way through the crush to the bar counter and ordered. As he paid for the beers he said, "Jones been in tonight?"

"Haven't set eyes on him since Tuesday, sir."

"What time on Tuesday?"

"About 6 p.m. (All right! All right! Be with you in a minute.)" The landlord moved further down the counter to attend to an impatient customer, and Henry carried the drinks to a table at which Hamish had managed to secure two seats.

"Any luck?" asked Hamish.

"Last seen for certain at around opening time on Tuesday evening. It doesn't get us any further. We know he was out and about until after lunch on Wednesday."

A hanger-on, who voluntarily collected empty glasses during rush hours in return for a free drink, came along and began to mop up their table.

"Hullo, Morgan," said Hamish. "Mr. Jones been in tonight?"

"Ain't seen 'im, sir, not for some time, nor yet tonight. Us thought maybe he was took bad," said the rheumy-eyed old man. "Not like 'im to miss us out, it ain't."

"Quite," agreed Henry. "Any special reason why you thought he might have been taken ill?"

"No, only just as he don't appear to be around, like. A rare one for his regular two or three doubles, is Mr. Jones. Not as nobody 'ceptin' the till ever benefited."

"That shall never be said about me. Your reproachful tone touches my heart, Morgan." A tenpenny piece changed hands. "And that is all you can tell us?"

"Now, then, Morgan!" called the landlord. "Glasses wanted!"

"Think 'e paid me, wouldn't you?" grumbled the old man. "All right! All right! Comin' over," he savagely responded. He left Hamish and Henry and shambled to the bar counter with his thick fingers thrust inside half-a-dozen empty glasses which he dumped down in front of the landlord. At the same moment a second barmaid, in all her evening finery and with a tremendous corsage of artificial flowers pinned to the front of her dress, came out from behind the scenes and joined the landlord at the counter. With a word or two in her ear, the landlord left her and her companion to cope with the customers and

came over to Hamish and Henry. He leaned over and spoke in low tones.

“Mr. Jones owes me fifteen nicker,” he said. “Carted off a car-load of stuff and five hundred fags last Monday. Asked him to pay me when he come in here Tuesday evening, but he said I’d have to wait ’til next day, as he hadn’t got his cheque book with him. ‘You know as I don’t take cheques,’ I said. Well, he agrees about that. ‘I mean the bank,’ he says. ‘I can’t get your money ’til I’ve been to the bank, and I can’t go there tonight, of course. You’ll get your money all right,’ he says. ‘What’s more, I’ve never welshed on you yet. I’m a good customer,’ he says, ‘so I don’t think much of your attitood.’ Well, he *has* been a good customer. I don’t say nothing about that, but I likes my money on the dot. You can’t afford to run up a slate in a pub, not to the tune of fifteen quid at a time. ‘I let you have the stuff as a favour yesterday,’ I said, ‘and I expected the money this morning.’ Well, he promised it faithful, but, like I’m telling you, I’ve never seen no more of him, and now you gents comes along here enquiring after him. When am I going to see my fifteen quid? That’s what I want to know.”

“Oh, you’ll get it all right,” said Henry. He turned to Hamish. “The College will pay it,” he said. “I’ll make myself personally responsible for bringing it here tomorrow,” he added, addressing the landlord.

“God bless tomorrow, in case it ever comes,” said the landlord sardonically. “But what brings you gents here? Don’t tell me he’s done a bunk!”

The next news of Jones’s whereabouts was dramatic and shocking. A white-faced student—a blameless type who had been expelled from his school for being in possession of pornographic literature which had been palmed off on him by some unknown addict who must have heard that fifth-form studies were to be searched for drugs—came bursting into Hamish’s room just as he was preparing to go down to breakfast on the morning following the visit to the inn.

“James,” the boy said, “the dogs! They’re digging up the long-jump pit.”

“Buried a bone there, I suppose,” said Hamish, but with a horrid premonition of the truth.

“No!” said the boy. He made a retching sound. “We think they’re digging up Jonah.”

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## CHAPTER 7

### Talk



The dogs lived in College, but actually belonged to Celia. They were a couple of lively, friendly, agreeable, wire-haired fox-terriers, great favourites with the students, who groomed and exercised them and who teased the plump, good-natured Celia about them, alleging that she kept them to protect her virginity from the Warden's predatory advances. As the Warden was a pillar of monkish virtue where the women on his staff and the women students were concerned, this had continued down the years as a time-honoured jest.

There was no jest attached to the present circumstances, however.

"Jones?" said Hamish. "Are you sure?" There was no need for the question. He had realized that before he asked it. The boy put his hand over his mouth and tore for the nearest lavatory. Hamish, striding along the corridor to Henry's room, encountered Martin, who was just going down to breakfast. "Hold it!" he said. "I want you."

"What the hell!" exclaimed Martin to the empty air; but, being simple-minded and naturally obedient, he remained where he was until Hamish came back accompanied by Henry. They leapt down the stairs and, once out of doors, began to run. There was no doubt about what was going on at the long-jump pit. The terriers were sending the heavy, damp sand flying in all directions. Hamish stepped into the pit and collared one of them; Martin picked up the other. The dogs squirmed in their arms and fought to get free.

"Take 'em away and lock 'em up somewhere," said Henry. "It's Jones all right. Get Gassie and then phone for a doctor. When you come back, we'd better get poor Jones to his quarters and clean him up a bit."

"Oh, no," said Hamish quickly. "You'd better leave him just where he is. He can't have died naturally, you know."

Henry straightened up and looked at him. "I see. Yes, of course," he said simply. "Well, if you'll get rid of the tykes and see to the rest of it, I'll stay on guard here and keep the students away."

“When I’ve telephoned the doctor, I’ve two more calls to make,” said Hamish to Martin, as they bore away the yelling, excited dogs.

“Yes, while you’ve got the phone to yourself, it’s as well to make all your private calls at once,” Martin agreed, “There’ll be such a hoo-ha later on, I’ll bet.” Only one of Hamish’s calls was personal. When he had rung up the College physician he telephoned the police, but then he put through a private call to the Stone House at Wandles Parva in Hampshire.

“Could I speak to Dame Beatrice, please?”

“Ah, it is Monsieur Jacques.” Not for worlds would Dame Beatrice’s elderly French housekeeper attempt to pronounce the word Hamish. “Please to ’old the line.”

Dame Beatrice’s unmistakably beautiful voice came over the telephone.

“Hamish, dear child?”

“I can’t stop, darling, but could you possibly come over? We’ve got trouble here. I think it might be murder.”

“Your mother and I will pay you a visit this afternoon as though it were merely a passing call, if that will do.”

Hamish came out of the alcove which housed the telephone and almost cannoned into the Warden.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” he said, stepping aside.

“The police!” said Gascoigne. “We must have the police!”

“They are on their way, sir. We assumed that you would wish them to take over as soon as possible.”

“This is a dreadful business, James, quite, quite dreadful. I cannot imagine how the students who are responsible will feel about such a terrible ending to their prank.”

“You really think it was a prank, sir?”

“Poor Jones! Poor Davy! With all his faults, I never wished him dead.”

“I have to inform you, sir, that my mother proposes to visit me this afternoon.”

“To visit you? Oh, dear! I think you must put her off. I don’t see how we can possibly entertain callers at a time like this.”

“I am very sorry, sir. I’m afraid she will be on her way. There is one thing, though. She will be accompanied by Dame Beatrice Lestrangle Bradley, who is my godmother.”

“Dame Beatrice?”

“The psychiatrist, sir.”

“A rope in the house of the hanged, eh?”

“With great respect, sir, I think it might be helpful to allow her to take a look at one or two of our doubtful cases. We don’t want any mistakes, and she won’t make any.”

“How do you mean—doubtful cases?”

“Well, sir, not to put too fine a point on it, we do have some rather neurotic types here, don’t you think? It would not take Dame Beatrice very long to sort out the sheep from the goats.”

“How would that help us?”

“It would not help *us*, sir, but it might help innocent parties.”

“I fail to understand you, James. She would hardly be in a position to find out who was responsible for the heartless prank which has culminated in this terrible tragedy. If it is known—nay, *once* it is known—that poor Davy may have been accidentally killed as the result of a College practical joke, every one of the students is going to close his lips and harden his heart, you may be sure. I have known of other incidents— not that they ended as seriously as this one...”

Henry came round the corner of the corridor.

“Oh, there you are, Gassie,” he said. “The doctor is here. I am sure you will wish to speak to him. I have placed Martin, Jerry, Barry and Miss Yale on guard and have had the gardeners rope in an enclosure around the pit. The sooner the doctor has seen the body, the sooner we can get poor Jones removed to a more seemly environment.”

“Not until the police have been here,” said Hamish, looking at the Warden for confirmation. “They’ve got to see the body exactly as it is, you know.”

Dame Beatrice and Laura Gavin lunched on the way to Joynings and reached the College at just after three. Sports practices had been suspended and both swimming pools were closed. This was only partly out of proper feeling. The police, in any case, wanted the sports field to themselves while they made their preliminary investigation and took measurements, isolated footprints, and put their photographers to work, and they also wanted to make a detailed inspection of the covered bath, especially of the cubicle in which the javelin, of which they took possession, had been found on the previous day.

They had scarcely taken their departure when Hamish, who had been hovering between his room and the open front door, met Dame Beatrice’s car and, postponing the necessary greetings to and by the Warden, took his mother and Dame Beatrice to his quarters.

“So it’s murder, is it?” asked Laura.

“Well, that has not been stated, mamma,” said Hamish, “but it’s a fair assumption, I’m afraid.”

“Who are the suspects?”

“Oh, now, really, mamma!”

“Too many to name, I should imagine, judging from your letters.”

“Yes, Mr. Jones seems to have had enemies,” said Dame Beatrice. “We will come to them in due course. I should be more interested, at the moment, to contact one of his friends.”

“Well, the Warden would be the nearest, I suppose, although I have reason to believe that he had it in for Jones, too,” said Hamish.

“I thought you told me in your letters that Jones was favoured by the Warden because he was his brother-in-law,” said Laura.

“True enough, mamma. But there was a later development. One of the maids complained and her father came up to the College. None of it was very savoury, I believe, and I happened to be present when the Warden talked to Jones about it.”

“Oh, yes? What did he say?”

“Well, he didn’t get very far, I’m afraid. It seems that, at some time in the past, Jones had rendered him some service or other. I don’t know what it was, but Jones played it up for all it was worth and practically dared Medlar to dismiss him.”

“Sounds like blackmail,” said Laura.

“Well,” said Hamish, “it wouldn’t be like Jones to have done anybody a disinterested kindness.”

“Mr. Jones disappeared last Wednesday afternoon, I think,” said Dame Beatrice. “Could we have the whole story?”

Hamish told them all that he could. It did not, he thought, amount to very much. Almost as soon as he had finished, and before they could comment or ask questions, Laura and Dame Beatrice received an invitation to take tea with the Warden.

“And when you have finished your own tea, sir,” the servant added to Hamish, “Mr. Medlar would be glad if you would join him and the rest of the staff in his private apartment.”

“The police,” said Gascoigne, when his staff had been accommodated with chairs and everybody except Hamish and the Warden were politely but enquiringly regarding Dame Beatrice and Laura, who were seated side by side on a settee, “have gone now, as you no doubt are aware. There will have to be an inquest, of course. That is unavoidable. However, the police seem prepared to

take the line that poor Davy's death was brought about accidentally by one of the students. The police believe that a careless javelin-thrower mortally wounded him, then panicked and attempted to hide the body. This opinion I myself share."

"Oh, no, it isn't nearly good enough!" cried Henry.

"Why not?" asked Miss Yale sharply. "Let's everybody out nicely, I would have thought." There was a murmur indicative of agreement with this opinion.

"I would not query it," said Henry, "but for two things: first, there is no doubt that Jones was kidnapped and hidden away, so that, since Wednesday, nobody except those responsible for this so-called 'rag' has seen him alive, and, besides, there is something which invalidates the theory that he could have been killed on the field by somebody practising with a javelin on his own."

"What?" demanded Barry.

"I lock the javelins away after every group coaching, so that nobody ever *is* at solitary javelin practice," explained Henry. "I should hope we know better than that! If angry passions should arise—and they do, of course—you couldn't trust some of the students with a javelin. We've a number of people here who have committed acts of violence in their time. Why, as you all know, even the cutlery is kept locked away when it's not in use. Very irresponsible idiots we should be if we left things like javelins and the shot and the hammer lying about for any bloody-minded lunatic to pick up and use! The only people to have access to them are Gassie, Miss Yale and myself."

"Oh, no. The rest of us have keys," said Lesley.

"But the javelin found in the indoor bath-house wasn't taken from stock," said Jerry. "Didn't you say it had Gassie's inscription on it?"

"I have shown my javelin to the police, of course," said Gascoigne, "but they are convinced that the stains on it are merely red paint put there by one of the students as a bizarre joke to frighten the woman diver who might use that particular cubicle. They will have the stains analyzed, of course, but, although the doctor has told them that poor Davy died as the result of a stab-wound—whether intentionally or accidentally inflicted—they are disinclined to believe that my javelin had anything to do with his untimely death. I sincerely hope and believe that they are right."

"I too, sir, since, so far as I know, I was the last person to handle that particular javelin," said Hamish.

"You? Oh, you mean at the swimming-bath? But that is not correct, James. Both Henry and I, I believe, handled it after that."

"I was not referring to its presence at the covered pool, sir. I was thinking of

the time when I catalogued your collection. I certainly handled it then and had every opportunity of abstracting it and bringing it away with me, had I wished to do so.”

“Are you telling us that *you* removed my javelin from the collection, James? You astound me!”

“I appreciate your feelings, sir, but allow me to assure you that I have never removed any object whatsoever from your collection. I thought it might avoid speculation, however, if I mentioned my connection with the javelin before it occurred to others to do so. Everybody knows that I catalogued the collection, so, to return to what I assume to be the point at issue, I am as hopeful as yourself that the stains on the javelin will prove to be red paint and not blood.”

“Well!” said the Warden. Before he could add to this exclamation a servant came to tell him that he was wanted on the telephone. Nobody spoke while he was gone. Barry took out a packet of cigarettes, looked at it and put it away again. Martin whistled a doleful little melody. Hamish looked across at his mother and raised his eyebrows. She grimaced and nodded. Dame Beatrice remained seated, straight-backed and inscrutable, an idol carved out of old ivory. Miss Yale got up suddenly and went out of the room. Time passed and the ticking of the clock could be heard like the pulse of a heart-beat.

Gascoigne returned before the silence became too oppressive.

“All is well, so far as my javelin is concerned,” he said. “I was right in assuming that the stains are nothing more than red paint. I must, of course, find out the identity of the mischievous person who purloined it from my collection, and I may have a clue to his identity when the inspector returns. The police found a piece of writing in the cubicle. It ran...” his smile became benevolent... “ ‘Gassie’s secret weapon.’ I doubt, though, whether I shall find it in my heart to be too hard on the culprit. It must be a great relief to us all to be able to write my javelin off as a misconceived jest. All the same, we are still faced with the fact of poor Davy’s death and of his most unseemly burial. The police, needless to say, are to come again to harass us. By the most fortunate chance, we have with us this afternoon someone of vast experience and, I am sure, of faultless tact”—he bowed to the settee—“who will consent, I hope, to assist us in finding the unfortunate youth who, I am sure, accidentally wounded poor Davy to death and then tried—and how uncouthly, poor boy!—to hide what he had done. Once we know his identity the inquest on Davy will be a mere formality, so I know you will all place any knowledge or suspicion you have of the culprit’s identity at the disposal of Dame Beatrice, so that she may clear the matter up for us and allow



the College to resume what is popularly known as normal working.”

He beamed upon the assembled staff. Dame Beatrice put an end to his expectations.

“I cannot undertake to find the criminal,” she said, emphasizing a word which nobody, so far, had used, “before the inquest is over and the verdict has been given, unless, of course, the proceedings should be adjourned.”

“You will not attempt to find the culprit until after the inquest?” asked Gascoigne, mingling incredulity with the disappointment in his tone.

“It is doubtful whether I *can* find him or her in so short a time, and that would settle our argument,” Dame Beatrice stated calmly. “All the same, I shall be glad to accept your invitation to have a word with your staff.”

“Anything, anything! Anything which will help to clear up this dreadful matter.”

“I wonder, then, since you are so good, whether I might begin with you yourself.” She glanced around the assembly. “You would prefer to answer my questions in private, I think.”

“No, no, not at all. I should prefer my staff to hear anything I have to say, although I fear there is little I can tell you.”

“I believe that Mr. Jones was a relative of your own.”

“Oh, yes, yes, indeed. Only by marriage, of course, but in that way we were related. He was my deceased wife’s brother.”

“When did he join your staff?”

“Four years ago last March.”

“Did he obtain the post by merit or because of the relationship?”

Gascoigne displayed horrified disapproval of this question, but decided to answer it in the same dispassionate tone as that of his inquisitor.

“Both,” he said. “He was a competent instructor, but I must admit that he was preferred to other candidates for the post because—well, for my dear wife’s sake—I felt that I owed him a living.”

“Very naturally, I suppose. Did the appointment cause any surprise or ill-feeling?”

“Well, it is strange that you should ask that. I had intended the gymnastics post to go to one of our old students. In fact I had half-promised it to him, and I know he was bitterly disappointed when I gave it to Davy. Fortunately another post, that of swimming coach, fell vacant, so I gave this fellow the job. Unfortunately he turned out to be something of a sadist. The students resented his methods and in the end they beat him up so severely that he had to go to

hospital. James now holds the post and I wish he could be persuaded to stay with us. Now, Dame Beatrice, is there any way in which I can further assist you?"

"If I am to talk to some of the students, it would be helpful if you could suggest which of them you would like me to examine."

"Ah, yes, of course." He went over to a filing-cabinet. "I keep a reasonably detailed note of the reasons for students coming here and my own reasons for accepting them. If you would care to glance through these," he handed her a fat folder, "I think you will get some idea of which cases would most interest you."

Miss Yale, who had returned while this conversation was going on, now remarked, in a most emphatic tone, "I've got something important to say, I've been checking the equipment. That's to say, I've been inspecting the cupboard where the javelins are kept. There's one I think you'd better look at, Gassie."

"Not blood-stained?" asked Gascoigne, alarmed.

"No, but you had better come and see it. Henry, you, too."

Without being invited, Dame Beatrice and Laura added themselves to the party and the five of them crossed the field to the changing-rooms. Miss Yale unlocked the door, led the way past the cupboards and lockers, through an arch and so into a room where the apparatus was kept. Here she unlocked a cupboard whose doors were of steel. There were a dozen javelins neatly stacked on grooved shelves, four javelins to each shelf. Miss Yale waved a large hand and stood back.

"Take a look, Gassie," she said.

"You know the stock and I do not," said Gascoigne to Henry. "What is Miss Yale telling us?" Henry cast an eye over the javelins and took up one of the implements by the cord-bound grip. He weighted it with bent elbow and shook it a little, then he held its point towards Miss Yale.

"This the one you mean?" he asked.

"Yes, of course. You can see why, can't you? As soon as Gassie mentioned red paint I thought of red herrings."

"Red herrings?" repeated Gascoigne blankly.

"So you dashed across here," said Henry, "just like that."

"Certainly I did."

"Why?" asked Dame Beatrice.

"Because, if Henry can't count, I can," replied Miss Yale firmly. "The last time I checked the javelins, my four were there, but Henry's tally was seven, not eight."

"There are eight here now," said Laura.

“I confess I didn’t realise one of mine was missing until now,” said Henry. “I only count them at stock-taking. I unlock the cupboard and stand by while the chaps help themselves.”

“Why did you suddenly decide to check?” repeated Dame Beatrice.

“Why?” said Miss Yale, in a tone which indicated that she was unused to being asked to explain her actions. “Oh, I don’t really know. Javelins having entered into the business, I thought it might be as well to look at the College collection of them, that’s all. And it’s just as well, perhaps, that I did.”

“I don’t really see why,” said Gascoigne testily, because he was alarmed. “After all, now that the stains on my javelin are found to be red paint, we still have to question whether the fatal wound inflicted on Davy was caused by a javelin at all. It does not follow automatically, does it?” he went on. “The doctor only mentions a stab-wound.”

“Put your finger on the point of the javelin which Henry is holding, and don’t press too hard,” said Miss Yale grimly. “If that bit of steel was ever issued by a highly respectable manufacturer of sports equipment, I’ll swallow it.”

“Well, yes,” said Gascoigne, gingerly touching the dagger-sharp point which Henry obligingly advanced towards him. “Somebody has tampered with this. Again, though, it may have been meant as a joke, don’t you think? The point, although murderously sharp, is perfectly clean.”

“I think the sooner it’s handed over to the police the better, anyway,” said Henry. “I will take it over to College, Gassie, and perhaps you will ring up the inspector.”

They returned to the Warden’s sitting-room, where the rest of the staff were awaiting them. Gascoigne rang up the police immediately he had taken the javelin from Henry and had locked it up in the ante-room. While he was telephoning, the staff heard the story of Miss Yale’s discovery of the altered javelin. She and Henry told it between them. Gascoigne returned while they were being questioned by their audience.

“When was the last stock-taking done?” asked Jerry, ignoring Gascoigne’s entrance.

“Three months ago,” Henry replied. “I checked all the equipment myself to see what repairs or replacements were necessary. The javelins were all in order then. I can swear to that.”

“Number correct as well?”

“Certainly. We always keep a dozen of them in stock. I can’t think how I came to overlook one, if what Miss Yale says is true.”

“So some clever blighter sneaked one and put a new head on it,” said Laura.

“Well, the workshops are always open and we don’t supervise them much.”

“Three months ago,” said Martin thoughtfully. “Could have been done by some joker who’s left, then. It need not be one of our present lot at all.”

“I think it’s pretty recent,” said Henry. “A javelin with that new head on it wouldn’t behave like an ordinary one. When I held it just now as one would at the beginning of the run-up, I could feel at once that the balance wasn’t right. If we’d been using it before Jonah’s accident, my squad would have noticed it at once, so it can’t have been done very long.”

“I wonder whether I might have a word with you, Mr. Henry?” asked Dame Beatrice.

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## CHAPTER 8

# Recalling the Runners



I wonder whether you'd mind if we talked on the field?" said Henry. "I promised a couple of shot-putters an extra go after tea." He and Dame Beatrice strolled out into the grounds, but found none of Henry's athletes.

"Am I to gather that you did not want to talk to me in front of Mr. Medlar?" she asked, glancing round the empty field.

"Well," said Henry, "Jones, as you know, was Gassie's brother-in-law and that makes things awkward. One can hardly call Jones a sweep and a reptile in front of a relative, especially as they always seemed to be on excellent terms with one another."

"Does your opinion of Mr. Jones coincide with that of the rest of the lecturers, then?"

"So far as I know, it does. I don't think anybody liked him, and one or two detested him."

"What about the students?"

"He was anything but popular."

"And from the outset you have never thought that his death was an accident?"

"No, I'm sure it wasn't, but, for the sake of the College, I hope the coroner's jury will say that it was. Of course, if the murderer—I don't flinch from using that word to you, although I shall avoid it most carefully when I'm talking to anyone else, Dame Beatrice—if the chap, as I say, had had the sense to leave Jones's body lying just where it fell, with the javelin still in place or beside it, I might have other ideas. It's this stupid business of burying him and the even more stupid business of choosing somewhere as obvious as the long-jump pit, which gives the game away. And then to plant the wrong javelin where it was bound to be discovered by anybody using the indoor baths seems to me to be folly not much short of insanity."

“Let us look at it another way.”

“Is there another way of looking at it?”

“Suppose *somebody else* moved the body and buried it and put a javelin in the swimming-bath? Had not that occurred to you? It seems to me quite possible that a death which *could* have been attributed to a fatal accident, and clearly was meant to appear so, was deliberately and mischievously made to look like murder by somebody who knew what had happened, intended the body to be found very easily, and also intended to indicate that murder had been committed, whether this was really the case or not.”

“It would take a warped mind to conceive of a thing like that, but I’m afraid we’re not short of warped minds in this place. So you think Jones’s death really *was* an accident, do you?”

“I did not say that, but suppose the person who killed Mr. Jones *had* left the body where it fell and had *not* removed the javelin afterwards, would you then have been satisfied that the death was the result of accident?”

Henry thought this over for a moment. Then he replied, “No, I would not.”

“Your reason?”

“I have more than one reason. In the first place, had it been any other member of the College staff, I *might* have thought that the death was accidental, but Jones, as I’ve said, was very generally disliked by everybody except Gassie. Secondly, there’s the business of this special metal point which somebody must have substituted for the one the manufacturers provided when we bought the javelin in the first place. I don’t like that. Thirdly, I don’t see how any student could have been out on the field at practice all on his own. As I thought I’d made clear, he couldn’t have got hold of a javelin.”

“Of course, we must not lose sight of the fact that, so far, we have no proof of how Mr. Jones was killed, have we? Some other weapon..”

“Even so, my point about the javelin still holds good.”

“It does not hold good if a member of the staff is implicated.”

“Oh, no, hang it all!” protested Henry. “You don’t *really* think it was one of *us*, do you?”

“Well, as you claim, you seem to have shown very clearly that no student could be in unlawful possession of a javelin. Did every member of the staff have a key to that steel-fronted cupboard?”

“I didn’t give James a key to it. There isn’t a spare, and there is no occasion for him to use the cupboard, you see.”

“Miss Celia?”

“Yes, she has a key. There are two or three wrapped-up bricks in there which she uses occasionally for life-saving practice. As Gassie conceives of them as objects of some menace, we keep them locked up.”

“Miss Lesley?”

“Her jumping-ropes, which have weighted ends, are kept in the cupboard. She once threatened to swing one at Jonah’s head, but that’s beside the point now.”

“Mr. Martin?”

“Helps me with the discus, hammer, javelin, and shot, so, of course, he needs a key to get access to the apparatus.”

“Mr. Jerry?”

“Starting guns. An ingenious student could turn them into lethal weapons. In fact, for Jerry’s Webley .38 you need a fire-arms certificate.”

“Miss Yale, of course, is in the same category as you and Mr. Martin, I believe. What about Mr. Barry?”

“The long-jump rakes are kept in the cupboard. Gassie takes simply no chances at all, and I think that is very sensible of him.”

“He himself has a key to the cupboard, I presume?”

“I suppose he’s got a full set of keys to every lock in the College. But I’m sure that, in going into details like this, you are barking up the wrong tree, Dame Beatrice. Whether Jonah’s death was an accident or not, it must have been caused by a student. After all, it was students, by their own confession, who carried him off and locked him away. They kidnapped Jones last Wednesday afternoon somewhere between the hours of two and four. By Thursday midnight Jones had been released or removed. The students say they had planned to set him at liberty, but when they went for him he was no longer there. Hamish and I both know that he was no longer there as early as Thursday night, as a matter of fact, because we went to look for him in the very place where the students say he was hidden away.”

“Has the doctor given his opinion of the approximate time of death?”

“Yes. He gave it to the police. The inspector, when he questioned Gassie and myself, told us that the medical opinion given by our own doctor and the police surgeon, was that Jones had been dead for round about thirty-six hours, give or take two to three hours each way.”

“Thirty-six hours?” said Dame Beatrice. “And at what time this morning did the doctor see the body?”

“Let me think. Yes, James came to fetch me at just before eight. Breakfast is

at eight and I was just about to leave my room and go down to it. The doctor came almost at once.”

“So thirty-six hours before that brings us to eight p.m. on Thursday. Could it possibly be rather later? After dark, perhaps?”

“That sounds very likely to me. It was after midnight on Thursday when James and I went along to the stoke-hole and got no reply from Jones. I see now why we did not. He was already dead.”

“Yes, he must have been. In your opinion—and bearing in mind that the doctors think he might have been dead either longer or less than thirty-six hours, when is the likeliest time...”

“For somebody to murder him? Well, it wasn’t done during Hall, because I always make a spot check at dinner. The best time to commit any unlawful act in this establishment would be at tea-time.”

“Oh? Why is that?”

“Tea is a hit-or-miss kind of meal here, and is laid on from four in the afternoon until five-thirty. Any student could miss it and nobody would wonder where he was. Some would stay on the field until perhaps five o’clock, others would go into tea at four and be out again by a quarter past, and so on. Tea is served buffet style in the halls of residence. Chaps just help themselves. The staff and the girls often brew up in their own quarters. All the women students are given their own crockery, so they go down to the kitchen and collect a pot of tea and some cakes and jam and take their tea in their own rooms, with or without their friends. The point I’m making, I hope, is that you couldn’t guarantee where any student would be, or what he would be doing, once the gong goes for tea.”

“And this applies until five-thirty, and to the staff as well?”

“Yes, it applies until the beginning of the last coaching-session, and even then lots of the students don’t attend a last coaching, but disport themselves in the pool or carry on in the workshops or follow other hobbies instead of taking a session or attending a blackboard or film-strip lecture on their particular event.”

“Do the swimming baths remain open during the tea interval?”

“You’re thinking of the covered bath where the javelin was found, are you not? The baths are not closed at all until the dressing-gongs are sounded at seven-thirty. We expect students to change for dinner in Hall, although there is no compulsion, of course. At this time of year it is the open-air pool which is popular. In fact, from tea-time onwards, except for the keen types who go for after-tea coaching or practice, the pool is the centre of the social life of the



College, although the women's gym is sometimes the scene of impromptu dancing."

"But after dinner both baths are closed? I see. What about the staff at tea-time? Where do they have their tea?"

"The same applies to us as to the women students. We take tea in our own rooms and often invite a youngster or two, or some of the other lecturers."

"And Mr. Medlar?"

"He's not much of a mixer, but quite often he will invite Miss Yale or myself to take tea with him. It's usually to discuss some College matter. He never invites students to tea, and I don't think he has ever asked any other lecturer to join him, except, of course, Jones."

"I wonder whether you will have time tomorrow to show me over the buildings?"

"Certainly I shall. The most important one, though, the covered bath in which the javelin was found, has been sealed off by the police."

"The most important building is not that in which a javelin was *found*, but that in which one was *used*, surely?"

"You don't think it was used out of doors, then?"

"As I am looking upon Mr. Jones's death as a case of murder, I think an indoor setting is more likely as offering less chance of the deed being witnessed by some passer-by."

"You are thinking of one of the gyms, perhaps. We have two, both spacious. One needs space in which to throw a javelin."

"If it *was* thrown, and if the weapon was a javelin—of which, now I have seen the one to which Miss Yale drew our attention, I feel reasonably sure—one would certainly need space. My own view (and I have a feeling that you share it) is that, with the new steel head on it, the javelin would make a very efficient stabbing-spear."

"You say 'if it *was* thrown', but whether it was thrown or whether it was used as a bayonet, it seems to me that the covered bath itself could be the place. There are mops about, used to swab down the tiles, and there is certainly plenty of water for washing out bloodstains."

"And a javelin was smeared with red paint and left in one of the cubicles to tell the tale."

"Sounds as though the killer is more than usually wrong in the head," said Henry. He turned his own head and added, "Oh, bother! Here's somebody wanting me, I think. A student named Kirk. Bit of a creep, I'm afraid."

“He curries favour with the lecturers?”

“No. Sneaks to Gassie about us, we think. If he peached on other students he’d have been beaten up long ago. Unfortunately Gassie is always open to complaints about the staff. Helps him to keep the tabs on us, I suppose. Wonder what Kirk is after with *me*? Acting merely as Gassie’s messenger, I expect. I’m probably keeping you out here too long. Shall we say eleven tomorrow morning for our tour of the buildings?”

Kirk came up to them. Hamish would have recognized him as the student he had kicked across the lecture-room on the day after his arrival at Joynings. He had had nothing to do with the youth since then. Kirk was a gymnast, one of the late Jones’s neglected squad. He had never attended another French lecture.

“Hullo, Kirk,” said Henry, as the spotty, ill-favoured stripling came up to him. “What can I do for you?”

“It’s more like what *I* can do for *you*,” said the lad, smirking.

“In what way?”

“Something I’d like to tell you.”

“My ears are open and receptive.”

“Could we go...” he glanced at Dame Beatrice—“could we—could it be in private?”

“Then why have you come out here?”

“Just to tell you I’d like a word. Oh, at your convenience, of course.”

“I’d like to have some idea of what it’s to be about. You must know how tied up and worried we all are at present. In other words, won’t it keep?”

“But, Henry, it’s about Jonah.”

“In that case, you may speak freely in front of Dame Beatrice. She is here to help us to find out exactly what happened.”

“What I’ve got to say she won’t like.”

“In that case,” said Dame Beatrice, “I assume that you are about to disclose some unsavoury matter relating to my godson. I assure you that I have not the slightest objection to hearing it. Besides, if your information has to do with Mr. Jones’s death...”

“James knew about Miss Yale’s key.”

“What key?” demanded Henry. “What are you talking about?”

“The key that hangs just inside her office door. You only have to slide your hand round to get it. It hangs on a board with her other keys. I saw James take it.”

“You’ll need a witness who will substantiate that statement, my boy,” said

Henry coldly, “but you haven’t answered my question. What key do you mean, and why is it important?”

“It opens the stoke-hole, that’s why.”

“In that case,” said Henry, “your statement that you saw James take the key is an absolute lie, and I can prove that it is.”

“Oh, yes?”

“When did you see James take it?”

“Why, on the afternoon of the night that you and he snooped round. And we know you did snoop round, so it’s no good denying it.”

“I had forgotten at that time about Miss Yale’s key,” said Henry, frowning thoughtfully, “but your ridiculous and mean little story falls to the ground, anyway. If anybody took that key, it was the kidnappers.”

“It wasn’t them. They had Jackson’s key.”

“So they told me. Well, I think you had better come with me to Gassie and then we’ll send for James and you can accuse him to his face.”

“Not me. And I’ll tell you something else. It was the javelin from Gassie’s collection that killed Jonah, wasn’t it?”

“What makes you say that?”

“It’s all over College. That girl who found it spotted the inscription.”

“Oh, yes, I suppose she did. What about it?”

“It’s also known that James was allowed in Gassie’s room to make a new catalogue,” said Kirk significantly.

“I see what you mean. It’s also all over College that James once treated you as I should like to treat you now, you scandal-mongering, revengeful little clot,” said Henry. “Come along. We’re going to get this cleared up.”

“All what cleared up? Here, I’m only *warning* you about James. I wanted him to be prepared. I thought you’d like to prepare him.”

“For what?”

“Well, questions.”

“Very well. We’ll all go along and see what questions Gassie would like to ask him.”

“Not me!” Before they realized what he was about to do, the youth was off across the field like a hare.

“Oh, well, time for him later,” said Henry. “I think, though, that it might be as well to have a word with Gassie about the little snake. Then, perhaps, we’d better tell Hamish what has been said.”

Gascoigne was perturbed by the story.

“A dangerous, spiteful boy,” he said at its conclusion; “but why should he select James for this tale? James had nothing against poor Davy, had he?”

“No. The fact is that James, at the beginning of his time here, had occasion to reprimand Kirk in a somewhat trenchant and forceful manner.”

“Oh? Why was that?”

“Kirk uttered an obscenity in front of a mixed class taking French.”

“I see. I will speak to Kirk and order him to recant. We cannot have these slanderous accusations being bandied around the College. I need hardly say that I have every confidence in James. Nobody who knows him would place a scrap of credence in this wretched boy’s story.”

“It might be as well for the police to hear it when they visit us again,” said Henry. He turned to Dame Beatrice. “Don’t you agree?”

“I think you are right. It is better that they should hear it from us than that it should come to them in a roundabout way from a student.”

“I think it might be better to let the story die a natural death, once I have interviewed Kirk and made him retract his accusation,” said the Warden.

“In any case, nothing will be of very much importance until we know the verdict following the inquest,” said Dame Beatrice.

“The verdict can be anticipated. It must surely be that of accidental death, followed by panic on the part of the student who caused it,” said the Warden.

“All I am still hoping is that Dame Beatrice’s researches will uncover the unhappy culprit before the inquest takes place. It will save a great deal of trouble if we can help the coroner in such a way.”

Dame Beatrice pursed up her little mouth and shook her head. The Warden’s expression changed. His unctuous look was replaced by one of concern and gravity.

“You do not agree?” he asked.

“I do not think it is our business to help the coroner. He would not appreciate our facing him with what he might regard as a *fait accompli*,” Dame Beatrice replied. “What is more, I feel certain that Master Kirk does know something important about Mr. Jones’s death, whether it concerns Hamish or not.”

“Well, he’s an accomplished little snooper,” said Henry, “so it’s quite likely he’s seen or heard something, I suppose. He certainly knows that James and I went to the stoke-hole that night.”

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## CHAPTER 9

# Speeches off the Record



I say,” said Martin to Hamish, when the meeting had broken up and they were back in Martin’s room, “is that handsome, fit-looking woman really your mother?”

“So she has always told me. I am not at all flattered by your surprise and doubt.”

“No offence. She doesn’t look old enough, that’s all. Tell me, what do you really think about this Jonah business?”

“I think it was murder, premeditated, and carried out in cold blood.”

“But by whom?”

“Well, in a way, Medlar would be the likeliest suspect, I suppose, being next of kin and all that.”

“That might be all right if it had been the other way about.”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, I thought you murdered your rich relations, not your hangers-on. Jonah hadn’t a bean except his salary. He was always making indirect allusions to the fact that his sister had left every penny to Gassie.”

“Well, being her husband, naturally Medlar would expect to come in for what she had to leave. I see no hardship for Jones in that.”

“According to Jonah, she could have left him a few thousands and Gassie would never have missed them.”

“Oh, well, if it was her money I suppose she had the right to do as she liked with it, and a husband or wife usually has the first claim.”

“It was money which her parents had left her, though, and Jonah thought some of it—the bulk of it, in fact—should have come to him, not her.”

“Why didn’t it? He was the son. It seems to me that it speaks for itself. I suppose the parents realised what a weak and vicious specimen he was.”

“Vicious, maybe, but would you call him weak? He seems to have had Gassie well tied up. I mean, I know they were related and that Jones had done

him some big favour or other in the past, but it isn't Gassie's style to let anything like that stand in the way of his reputation."

"You mean the reputation he gained through the College, I suppose. *L'état, c'est moi*. That kind of thing."

"Well, given a few more Berthas, Joynings's name would soon be mud. It's no longer the fashion to get the maids into trouble and then sack them."

"Was Bertha sacked?"

"I don't know, but she had to leave, so it comes to the same thing in the end."

"Well, hardly, but I see what you mean."

"Why does Gassie want that terrifying old lady to vet the students?"

"That terrifying old lady is my godmother, so watch what you have to say about her. I think he meant exactly what he said. It will give the students something else to think and gossip about, besides Jones's death."

"Funny that she and your mother should have picked this day of all days to visit you here."

"Coincidences do occur," said Hamish, who had decided not to be drawn, even by his friend, into admitting that Dame Beatrice was at the College because he had asked her to investigate what appeared to be a case of murder.

This was not the only conversation between members of the staff which was going on at the time.

"I don't much like it," said Barry to Jerry.

"Don't like what?"

"That old lady is a witch and, if you ask me, this is going to be a witch-hunt."

"That means witches *being* hunted. They didn't *do* the hunting. As a matter of fact, I know all about her. She isn't only a psychiatrist. She's a brilliantly successful smeller-out of murderers."

"So what?"

"Well, you don't think Jonah's death was accidental, do you?"

"I most certainly do, and I suggest you begin thinking the same and convincing yourself that you're right."

Jerry was silent and looked thoughtful. Then he said, awkwardly, "Well, anyway, I think you and Lesley both ought to watch your step."

Barry turned on him and angrily demanded, "Look here, what do you mean by that?"

"All right. I'm talking as a pal, Barry, old man, so don't take umbrage. Just cast your mind back a bit and think things over. You and Lesley have both

opened your mouths a lot too wide, if you ask me,” said Jerry firmly.

“But, good lord! I mean, nobody would think I’d do Jones in because of what happened to Colin!”

“No, not because of that in itself, but you’ve made a few threatening remarks from time to time and people remember these things, particularly when the police begin questioning them.”

“Oh, to hell with the police! All that we have to do is to stick to the theory of accident. A student, fooling about with a javelin, killed Jones and that’s the beginning and the end and the long and the short of it.”

“What about the burial in the long-jump pit? Doesn’t that look like guilt?”

“Put it down to panic, that’s the safest bet.”

“Well, yes, one might get away with that. I can well understand that you don’t want your name connected with long-jump pits more than it is already.”

“I’m damned if I can think what you mean!”

“Well, think a bit harder. The police are going to hear all about Colin, you know, and they’re not going to let up until they’ve got to the bottom of what actually happened to Jonah. And what happened to Jonah was murder. I’m certain of that.”

“Very well, stick your neck out and tell everybody, only don’t be surprised if you get your head chopped off. As for me, much as I detested Jonah, I don’t even know how to *throw* a javelin, damn it!”

“That javelin didn’t have to be thrown,” said Jerry. “Don’t you realize that?”

Barry stared at him, his face whitening. “God!” he said. “Neither it did. Not with that head on it, no.”

“What I’d like to know,” went on Jerry, “is *when* the point of the javelin was changed, apart from who changed it and why.”

“With the workshops open until evening Hall, and often no supervision over the chaps who use them, it could have been done at any time during the past year or two, couldn’t it?”

“No, it must have been done very recently, or Henry, or Ma Yale, or the students themselves would have spotted that a much heavier, sharper point had been put on one of the javelins. The fellow was a fool to put it back with the others. He should have taken damn good care to lose it.”

“The students can’t get away from here, and, anyway, anybody carrying a dirty great spear about would look pretty conspicuous, wouldn’t he?”

The third conversation between members of Gascoigne Medlar’s staff was carried on by Miss Yale and Lesley.

“Well,” said Miss Yale, pouring hospitable drinks, “Celia is well out of this.”

“Out of what?”

“The hoo-ha over Jonah’s death and burial.”

“Why is she? She couldn’t have had anything to do with it, even if she’d been in College at the time. She’s a swimming and diving expert, not a fancy spear-hurler. However the thing happened, and for whatever reason (unless it was an accident, and that’s what I’m perfectly prepared to believe), one of the students is responsible.”

“Why are you so sure of that? Jonah was as unpopular with us as he was with them; even more so, perhaps, with some of us.”

“Who, for example?” asked Lesley, staring hard at Miss Yale as she put this abrupt question.

“Do you really want me to answer that?”

“Oh, well, I know I talked a bit wildly about those two girls of mine, but it was only to let off steam. You know that as well as I do. Come to that, I don’t think I’ve ever so much as *touched* a javelin, let alone knowing what to do with one if I got hold of it. If anybody on the staff chucked one at Jonah, I can think of far more likely people than myself who could have done it.” And she returned Miss Yale’s hard stare.

“Me, for one,” said Miss Yale. “Actually, you know, I think we can rule ourselves and the women students out. A woman might use a dagger, but to stick a pig—well, it isn’t women’s work, say what you like. But, going back a bit, I don’t see why it shouldn’t have been an accident. Accidents do happen. One of the spectators at the sports last year was nearly killed by a hammer-thrower, and we’ve had quite a few near-misses with the discus at one time and another. All the same, though—”

“What?” asked Lesley, looking anxious.

“Whoever did it buried the body. Surely, if it had been merely an accident, the person responsible would have come charging into the senior common room for help?”

“In any normal institution, yes, but supposing you’d already got something on your conscience? Some of the men-students have rather impressive records, haven’t they?”

“Somebody did it by accident and simply panicked. Is that your idea?”

“That’s what I’m going to think, and I advise you to do the same. It’s the hell of a nuisance that those two women had to turn up this afternoon.”

“Why? The sooner Dame Beatrice can find out what really happened,



whether Jonah was killed by accident or design, the sooner we can all forget about it and resume normal working.”

“Much better if Gassie had decided to tell the tale to the authorities about a fatal accident which occurred at normal athletics practice, but that’s impossible now.”

“He’d have had to find a scapegoat, even at that, though,” said Miss Yale, “and who’s going to own up to killing, however accidentally, an unpopular blackguard like Jonah? But why don’t you want a proper enquiry made? You haven’t got anything to hide, I hope?”

“No more than *you* have,” said Lesley spitefully. “I shouldn’t think any of the staff (except the blameless James) want the police poking a nose into their affairs.”

“You may be right, but there are degrees of guilt, I suppose.”

“And what, exactly, do you mean by that?” Lesley’s hard stare had turned into a glare of hatred.

“I’ll spell it out for you, although I’m sure there’s no real need,” said Miss Yale calmly, “by asking you a question. Why did you take a job here?”

“Because I had the necessary qualifications and because the pay was good.”

“Oh, yeah? And what about Sealcombe?”

“I don’t know what you mean.” Hatred was replaced by alarm in Lesley’s lustrous eyes.

“You do, you know—or shall I tell you?” asked Miss Yale.

“If it comes to that, why did *you* take a job here?”

“Same sort of reason.”

“Does Gassie know about us?”

“I daresay he does. We’re not the only ones who were glad of the chance to find a hiding-place. We’re here because he can trust us.”

“You mean he deliberately employs people who... ?”

“Of course, we’ve still got to be first-class at our job. That goes without saying. Given that, however—yes, I think Gassie does *deliberately employ us*, as you put it. Gives him a fellow-feeling with us, I suppose.”

“Do you mean that Gassie himself is...”

“Officially, no. Unofficially, there was a lot of local stink about the death of his wife. Anyway, watch your step with this Bradley woman. It might be as well not to tell her too many lies. From all I’ve ever heard, she’s got second sight where liars are concerned.”

“Thank you, I’m sure,” said Lesley bitterly.

Henry and Dame Beatrice found Gascoigne Medlar in conference with Barry, Lesley and Miss Yale, for the conversation between the two women had been interrupted by a summons from the Warden.

“So you may go ahead with the new landing-areas for jump and pole,” he was saying, “but please impress upon the students that they are very expensive items and must be treated with the greatest respect.”

“I’m glad the landing-stuff for the high jump has come,” said Miss Yale. “I’ve a girl who will attempt the Fosbury Flop.”

“I’ve got a lad who will do it, too,” said Barry. “Now that Colin’s sunk for the long-jump I can do with a good high-jump man, and if we have the landing-area our pole-vault may return to popularity.”

“Well,” said Gascoigne, beaming upon his chief-of-staff, “you have Henry to thank for getting you the apparatus so quickly. Did you wish to see me in private, Dame Beatrice?”

“Far from it, my dear Warden,” she replied. “We—Mr. Henry and I—have just received some disquieting news from a Mr. Kirk concerning my godson, Hamish Gavin. As I am convinced that the youth (although he is lying about Hamish) does have some knowledge of how Mr. Jones came to his death (or, more likely, to his burial), I should wish you to confront him and question him, if you will be so good.”

“Kirk?” said the Warden. “Oh, yes, I know him. *Not* one of our most lovable characters, I’m afraid. What has he been saying about James?”

“We would prefer that you heard it from his own lips, and that we were not present. I refuse to allow him to say that he was intimidated,” said Henry.

“Ah, yes. I wonder, Barry, whether you will be good enough to chase the boy up and bring him over here?”

“Certainly,” said Barry, smiling. “Coming, Lesley?”

“I’ll come as well,” said Miss Yale grimly. “If this wretched youth *does* know something about Jonah’s death, there may be safety in numbers.”

“Whatever do you mean by that?” asked Barry sharply. Miss Yale raised formidable eyebrows and did not answer. The three went off in search of Kirk and the Warden turned again to Dame Beatrice. “Am I to be given no clue to Kirk’s remarks concerning James?” he asked. “Perhaps I might hazard a guess. It is common knowledge that James re-catalogued my collection of trophies and mementoes. Does the misguided youth think that he removed my javelin, daubed it with paint and placed it in the swimming-bath cubicle?”

“What it amounts to,” said Henry, before Dame Beatrice could answer, “is

that he suggests James killed Jonah.”

“But that is too ridiculous a suggestion to be taken seriously,” said Gascoigne. “On the other hand, I do wish we could find out who *did* remove my javelin. I have the utmost confidence in James’s assertion that the key to my ante-room has been in no hands save his own and mine, so it is disturbing, to say the least, to realize that some unauthorized person has the means of entry.”

“You might try Miss Yale’s key to the stoke-hole,” said Henry significantly. “I’ll go and get it, shall I? I know it has been returned to her, and I’ve an uneasy feeling that it may fit more than one lock in this place.” He went off upon his errand and had been gone less than two minutes when Miss Yale herself returned, but without her companions.

“The students say that Kirk is down at the outdoor pool,” she said, “so Barry has gone over there to tell him to dress and report to you.”

“And Henry has gone to impound your key to the heating-cellar,” said Gascoigne. “Do you happen to know whether it is a master-key of sorts? If so, I think you had better yield it up, unless you can think of a safer place in which to keep it. I cannot remember, at the moment, why you ever had a key to the heating-cellar.”

“It dates from the time when we had the central-heating system altered,” said Miss Yale, “and we had to supply the foreman with a key so that he was able to let his men into the stoke-hole without having to bother the janitor or you for yours. When the job was finished he returned the extra key. I should have handed it over to you, I suppose, but I hung it on a hook with my lecture-room key and thought no more about it.”

Henry returned with the key. It fitted not only the lock on the ante-room door, but the door of Gascoigne’s study as well.

“Must be a master-key,” said Miss Yale. “Wonder what else it unlocks?”

“Most perturbing. *Most* perturbing,” said Gascoigne. “I think we had better find out. Of course, whoever placed my javelin in that cubicle was acting merely in jest, but—oh, well, come along with me, Miss Yale, and let us test this Open Sesame of yours.”

“What about Kirk?” asked Henry, as the Warden went towards the door.

“Oh, Kirk can wait until I return. I shall not be long. He has to get dried and dressed, in any case. He won’t be over just yet,” the Warden responded.

“All the same, Dame Beatrice and I will make ourselves scarce, I think,” said Henry. “I don’t think he ought to find us here when he arrives.”

“Of course,” said Henry, when he and Dame Beatrice had left the Warden’s

room, “either the thought that Jones was murdered has never entered Gassie’s head, or, if it has, he is still determined to disregard it. Whom do you want to see next?”

“Hamish himself, I think. He should be made acquainted with the position in which Mr. Kirk has placed him.”

Hamish received the news calmly.

“The little such-and-such,” he said, “has had it in for me all the term, I suppose. Well, I’d better begin by establishing an alibi, had I not, Mrs Dame, dear? By the way, my devotion to my mamma has taken the form of giving her my room. It’s a very nice room and commands a spacious view. You, I hear, have been allotted Jonah’s magnificent quarters because they include a rather splendid sitting-room which the thoughtful Henry, to whom are referred most of the matters which require thought in this institution, felt you might be glad to use as a consulting-room while you are interviewing the suspects. With whom do you propose to begin? I am at your service, if you desire to start with me.”

“Some of the students may provide me with more scope for my enquiries, I think,” said Dame Beatrice, “so if Mr. Henry will conduct me to these quarters you describe, I will leaf through the material which Mr. Medlar has so kindly provided.”

“I hope you don’t object to using Jonah’s quarters,” said Henry, opening the sitting-room door of these. “We’ve had all his things moved out. The police agreed to that, as soon as they’d finished with his rooms.”

“They are indeed palatial,” said Dame Beatrice, surveying the handsome furniture and fittings. Henry closed the door and they advanced further into the room. “You know that Hamish sent for me, I suppose?”

“I guessed as much. Well, I expect you would like me to leave you while you look through Gassie’s papers. I had better be on hand when he finishes with Kirk. He hates being angry with a student.”

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## CHAPTER 10

### Gascoigne Medlar



Gascoigne's case-book was interesting and informative, and Dame Beatrice perused it carefully until the bell she had been told to expect indicated that it was time to dress for dinner. She had been told by Henry that Richard was the oldest student in College and was twenty-one years of age. As no student was accepted until he or she had passed the sixteenth birthday, she needed only to study the entries for the past five years to gain knowledge of the students who were now in residence.

Most of the entries she skipped through. It was interesting to note that most of them for the past three years referred to expulsions from school for taking or being in possession of drugs. Before that, the reasons varied and some of the offences seemed trivial. She did, however, read carefully the notes which referred to violence, but these were few and the reasons, if Gascoigne had understood the evidence and reported it faithfully, seemed, if not adequate, at least self-explanatory.

She and Laura were given seats at the high table for dinner; the conversation was nothing more than small-talk and not until the end of the meal was anything said about the purpose of Dame Beatrice's staying in the College. It was Gascoigne himself who introduced the subject a little later in the evening.

"I suppose," he said, taking a seat beside her when they repaired to the senior common room for coffee, "it is unrealistic to imagine that you have come to any conclusions so far?"

"I have come to *one*," she replied. "It depends upon the fact that a small number of students, including a young woman, were responsible for locking Mr. Jones in a cellar which houses the plant for the central heating."

"Oh, Henry has all that in hand. I believe he has admonished the culprits. He gave me their names, but I cannot think that they know anything about poor Davy's death."

"Probably not. All the same, I think I had better have a first-hand account of

the matter from the young woman concerned. She is somewhere in the house itself, I assume, so it will be easier to contact her than to send over to the halls of residence for one of the young men who were involved."

"I will find out from Miss Yale where she is domiciled. At the moment I expect she is in the women's junior common room." He crossed over to where Miss Yale was talking to Laura. "Dame Beatrice would like to talk to Kathleen," he said. "Do you think you could find her and send her to what was Davy's sitting-room?"

Miss Yale looked across at Dame Beatrice with no very friendly or approving gaze.

"I suppose so," she said. "Not that Kathleen is going to care much about Jonah's quarters as a rendez-vous."

"Death comes to us all," pronounced Gascoigne piously. "I don't suppose poor Davy *haunts* the place."

"That's not what I meant," said Miss Yale. She got up and went out of the room, returning in a few minutes to say in a firm, repressive voice, "Kathleen awaits your pleasure, Dame Beatrice."

Dame Beatrice thanked her and glanced at Laura, who rose and went with her to Jones's quarters. They found a frightened, sulky child waiting on the landing.

"I'm not going in there," she said flatly.

"How uncompromising you sound," said Dame Beatrice lightly. "Very well. Would you have the same objection to entering Mr. James's room? We can go there, if you prefer it."

"Oh, all right, then," said the girl. "After all, Jonah isn't here now." She opened the door to Jones's sitting-room and went in. "You won't pin anything on me, you know," she said. "You're wasting your time."

"Ah, well, it, like my money, is my own," said Dame Beatrice mildly, "Do sit down. May I call you Kathleen? This, as I expect you know, is James's mother." Laura, who had closed the door, sat down at the *escritoire*, took out a pencil and provided herself with a sheet of paper.

"Everything you say will be taken down in writing and may be given in evidence," said the girl bitterly.

"Dear me! I didn't know you had ever been in the hands of the police," said Dame Beatrice.

"Ought to have been. Shop-lifting. They didn't press the charges."

"Your mother had an account at the shop in question, of course, and she

corroborated your explanation that you had been shopping on the strength of it, I suppose.”

The girl looked startled at first by this display of omniscience. Then she said, “Didn’t want a fuss. Bad for her image. You got that from Gassie, I suppose.”

“From some notes he lent me, yes. And now let me suggest that we get down to business. The sooner it’s over, the sooner to sleep, don’t you think? Will you tell me all about the kidnapping and incarceration of Mr. Jones?”

“I suppose the police told you about that! Well, they’ve spoken to me. They’ve seen all six of us. I’m not saying any more to anybody. I don’t know what happened to Jonah and I couldn’t care less, and none of us knows anything about it.”

“Convince me of that,” said Dame Beatrice. “No,” she went on quickly, “swearing at me won’t help. I’m prepared to believe your story. That is, I am prepared to believe as much of it as you are prepared to tell me. I know it won’t be the whole truth, but I think that the part you are going to tell me will be the truth. Up to a point, you see, you have nothing to hide. After that point I will tell the rest of the story to you, if you like. Come, now, what do you say?”

“Look,” said the girl uneasily, “how much do you know?”

“That I am not disposed to tell you at present, any more than you are disposed to pay me the same compliment, so that is fair enough. Here goes, then. I know that six of you, yourself and five young men, arranged and conspired together to kidnap Mr. Jones and shut him up in a cellar. Taking advantage of the fact that all the rest of the staff were occupied, some with a film show, some on a cross-country run, and so on, you followed Mr. Jones to his lock-up garage, took him prisoner and incarcerated him. You left food with him and planned to release him on Thursday night or last Friday morning.”

“Yes, but he wasn’t there.”

“No, he was dead by then. What is more, you knew he was dead. I will go even further. You even knew that he was to be buried in the long-jump pit.”

“No! No, we didn’t! We thought somebody else—one of the staff—had let him out. We *didn’t* know he was dead!”

“Then why did you hold a council, the six of you, and, in a panic, decide to tell Mr. Henry that you had kidnapped and imprisoned him? It was quite unnecessary, if you *really* thought he had been freed. Can you not see that?”

The girl was silent. Dame Beatrice waited. At last Kathleen muttered, “I don’t know. He—Jonah—he wasn’t at lunch, so I suppose that’s why.”

“I don’t think that will do, you know,” Dame Beatrice said gently. “Mr. Jones

was often absent from lunch. He used to drive into the village or the town and obtain lunch and a drink at a public house. There was no secret about this, was there?"

"I suppose there was not."

"I *know* there was not. So why should the six of you have decided to own up to the kidnapping unless you knew perfectly well what had happened to Mr. Jones?"

"I don't know."

"Well, in that case, perhaps I had better tell you."

"No! I don't want to hear! I won't listen!" Kathleen got up, rushed to the door, flung it open, and ran.

"Want me to chase after her?" asked Laura.

"No, no. She will keep, as the police would say."

Laura went over and closed the door which the girl had left wide open.

"You've scared her stiff," she remarked, resuming her seat. "I'll transcribe my shorthand, shall I?"

"By all means. Meanwhile, I think I would like a word with Mr. Medlar."

"They don't run to an inter-com. system here. I'll go and page him for you."

"We will both go, then. The notes can wait."

"Are you going to voice your suspicions to him?" Laura gathered up her shorthand notes and pushed them into her handbag.

"I think not, but that depends upon how our conversation goes. Let us try the senior common room. He may still be there."

The senior common room, however, was deserted except for a maid who was gathering up empty coffee cups.

"Mr. Medlar, madam," she said, "I expect he's in his office. He usually works there of an evening. I have orders to take his whisky and soda in there at half-past ten."

"Ah, then," said Dame Beatrice to Laura, "we must not disturb him." They returned to Dame Beatrice's room to find Hamish loitering outside the door.

"Hullo," he said. "I knocked, but you weren't there, so I thought I'd hang about. I didn't think you'd be long, as you could hardly be with Gassie."

"Why not? We went along to see him, as a matter of fact," said Laura.

"To find out, rather, whether it was possible to see him," amended Dame Beatrice. "We found that it was not. He had retired to his office to work."

"He'd retired to his office to go into a huddle with Henry, Miss Yale and the girl Kathleen," said Hamish. "She came to the senior common room in no end of



a taking. What *have* you been a-doin' to her? She was racked with sobs and, from what I could interpret, was demanding your head on a charger. Gassie then called a council of war and led the weeping Niobe off to his den, followed by his faithful henchmen."

"Why the support?" asked Laura.

"He never sees the women students in his office or his sitting-room unless Miss Yale is there. It's like in a police station, where they always have a woman P.C. in the room, I believe, when they're questioning a female suspect. It looks more official and averts disadvantageous comment. Besides, the women students don't give a fig for Gassie, but they're terrified of old Nokomis. Why Henry was hauled in I don't know."

"Well," said Dame Beatrice, "I thought I had upset the girl, but I hardly expected that she would go to these lengths."

"I thought I'd made it clear in my letters that they always run to Gassie if they have any complaints."

"I did not know that it included complaints about casual visitors. By the way, do you remember talking over with me the suggestion that you should take up a temporary appointment here?"

"Yes, of course. You told me that Medlar had once been second master at Isingtower School. I mentioned it to him on my first day here. He didn't seem altogether overjoyed to think that I knew. Instead of discussing it in a cosy manner, he jettisoned the subject with some abruptness, I thought. Wasn't he a success at Isingtower?"

"As a schoolmaster? I have no idea. As a kindly husband, however, quite a number of people seem to have decided that he was wanting. His wife was drowned in the bath and there was a great deal of unpleasant talk. The wife left a good deal of money, you see, and all of it went to Gascoigne Medlar."

"Did he ever come to trial?"

"No. The case went as far as to the magistrates and they dismissed it—or so Ferdinand told me. That was when he knew you were coming here. *He* thought Medlar was guilty."

"He seems to have followed the proceedings pretty closely. How about *you*? Do you think, from what you were told, that Medlar was guilty?"

"Again, I have no idea. All I gathered was that Mr. Henry's evidence may have turned the scale."

"Henry? What on earth had he to do with it?"

"He affirmed in cross-examination by the defence—he was the prosecution's

witness—that Mrs Medlar’s mental health was such that she might have decided to end her own life. In fact, she was a dipsomaniac—I suppose nowadays it would be more fashionable to call her a confirmed alcoholic— and was subject to severe attacks of alcoholic depression. Mr. Henry, I am afraid, proved a thorn in the flesh of his (supposedly) own side.”

“But is Henry qualified to express that sort of opinion?”

“Oh, yes. Until he accepted a partnership at Joynings he was a well-known psychiatrist.”

“You knew him, then, before you came to see me?”

“That argues a degree of acquaintanceship to which I do not aspire. I have seen him at conferences occasionally. I do not remember that I ever spoke to him until I came here.”

“And he’s Medlar’s partner? Well, I’m hanged! I say, I suppose that doesn’t stink a bit, does it?” asked Laura.

“Mr. Henry—I know his surname, of course—has always been interested in young people. At one time he was psychiatric consultant to a county education authority, I believe. I should imagine that he finds his work here very interesting and rewarding.”

“And profitable, I imagine,” said Laura.

“Now, mamma, not a word against Henry,” said Hamish. “I like him very much.”

“What was the evidence on which Mr. Medlar was taken before the magistrates?” asked Laura.

“According to Ferdinand, who furnished me with such facts as I know, it was asserted that he was alone in the house with his wife when it happened.”

“Didn’t they live at the school, then?”

“Yes, but there was some sort of jamboree which involved all the boys and which the servants had leave to attend.”

“Why didn’t Medlar attend it?”

“He said that he dared not leave his wife in the house alone, and Henry concurred in this. Mrs Medlar, because of her disability, never attended school functions, so the police took the view that opportunity had knocked at Mr. Medlar’s door and that it was too much of a coincidence that his wife had been drowned under such circumstances.”

“And under such water,” said Laura. “Personally, I agree with the police. I think it was fishy in the extreme.”

“Your choice of metaphor, mamma, may be exact, but it is unfortunate,

perhaps,” said Hamish. “Anyway, if Henry ever did have any doubts, I’m wondering whether the murder of Jonah hasn’t resolved them.”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, there *is* such a thing as blackmail. Suppose some evidence was available which showed that Medlar *was* guilty and that Jones had come across it? After all, Medlar had never been brought to trial and acquitted. A case against him could still be made to stand up, couldn’t it? Don’t you think Jones could have been blackmailing Medlar for years and that Medlar got sick and tired of it? I really believe that if anybody blackmailed *me* I’d do my level best to lay him out. But if Henry’s evidence could save Medlar from being sent for trial, why did the prosecution call him? Naturally the defence wouldn’t, not at a preliminary hearing.”

“The police intended that he should assent to their lawyer’s submission that Mrs Medlar’s condition was as I have described it and that it was in Mr. Medlar’s interests, emotionally as well as financially, that he should be rid of her. The defence, however, cross-examined Mr. Henry with intent to show that she was quite capable of drowning herself, because she was either too drunk to know what she was doing, or too lacking in mental stability to reject the idea of suicide.”

“Didn’t the prosecution call any other witnesses? The police are usually cautious about prosecuting a man unless they’re pretty sure of their case.”

“There was also the question of the will. It was argued by the prosecution that Mrs Medlar was of sound mind when she made the will and that therefore it was valid and that Mr. Medlar knew this and had killed her in order to get hold of the money. Unfortunately for them, they then called Mr. Jones, the deceased wife’s brother and only surviving relative.”

“Pickled, I suppose,” said Hamish.

“I should hope not! All the same, there is no doubt that he appears to have told a garbled story and the magistrates decided that what they had heard was insufficient to justify a committal.”

“So, between them, Henry and Jones saved Medlar’s bacon,” commented Hamish.

“And both have been substantially rewarded,” said Laura. “Up to the time of Jones’s death, that is to say. And the will stood up all right, did it?”

“Oh, yes. Two doctors agreed that the poor woman was *compos mentis* when she made the will eight years earlier and this meant that Mr. Medlar inherited the money.”

“Why was Jones brought into it?”

“He was supposed to testify that he had heard Mr. Medlar utter threats against his wife. By the time his cross-examination was over, however, it seemed just as likely, on the face of it, that Mr. Jones had drowned his sister in exasperation because she was leaving nothing to him, as that Mr. Medlar had drowned his wife because she *had* left everything to *him*.”

“A sort of non-proven, in fact,” said Laura.

“But was Jones anywhere in the neighbourhood at the time?” asked Hamish.

“The question was not asked. The magistrates retired and conferred and I imagine that Mr. Medlar’s excellent reputation came up for discussion and that one of the justices who, as chairman of the school governors, had been obliged to declare an interest and retire from the bench while the case was being heard, may have put in some powerful pleading behind the scenes.”

“Yes, I suppose that can happen,” said Laura, “because, naturally, the school governors wouldn’t want their second master tried for murder. It was bad enough that he was even brought before the Bench. Enough to blot *any* school’s copybook.”

“Fortunately the governors and the headmaster were saved from further embarrassment,” said Dame Beatrice. “It appears that Mr. Medlar finished the school term, which had only a week to run, and then forfeited six months’ salary in lieu of giving the proper amount of notice and retired from his post at Isingtower.”

“And took on Joynings, whereby we now find ourselves in this mess,” said Hamish.

“Dame Beatrice was asking for you, sir, while you were engaged,” said the maid, when she took in Gascoigne’s night-cap of whisky and soda.

“Was she? Oh, well, I expect it is too late now, but perhaps you will go along and find out. If she has not retired, and is at liberty to receive me, let me know and I will go along.”

Laura and Hamish made themselves scarce when the maid brought the Warden’s message and, as soon as he received her invitation, Gascoigne went to talk with Dame Beatrice in what had been Jones’s sitting-room.

“I am glad to have the chance of talking with you,” he said. “One of the women students has been to me in great distress of mind. She appears to think that you have accused her and others of being responsible for poor Davy’s death.”

“She exaggerates, as no doubt you have decided,” said Dame Beatrice.

“Please sit down, Mr. Medlar. To be plain with you, I think Kathleen and her friends do know more than they have told you, although I have accused them of nothing more than of withholding information.”

“What more do you think they know?” There was anxiety in Gascoigne’s voice.

“I think they know where Mr. Jones was killed and I think they buried the body. No, no,” she added, noticing that Gascoigne was about to speak. “I do not think for one single instant that they killed him. I think they buried the body merely out of panic, fearing that they would be blamed for the death if the body was discovered in the place where they found it.”

“Then that must have been in that cellar when they went to release him! But the police made a careful search. There was nothing to suggest that Davy died there. The inspector told me so.”

“It is rare for the police to make known *all* their findings in a case of this kind, is it not?”

“But what makes you think that those six students buried the body? I simply cannot believe it.”

“It is the only theory which seems to accord with the facts. Do you care for me to recapitulate them?”

“In the light of what you suspect, I should think it just as well.”

“Very well, then. I begin from what was my own point of departure. Having kidnapped Mr. Jones on the Wednesday afternoon, the six students, who were in a panic by the Friday morning, then went to Mr. Henry and confessed to what they had done.”

“Yes, I know, but that was because they had discovered that Davy was no longer where they had left him.”

“I hardly think that was the sole reason for their reaction. It is true that they had obtained possession of a key to the cellar, but it seems common knowledge that there was a second key and one which was readily available, not only to them, but to anybody who chose to filch it.”

“You mean the one which hung just inside Miss Yale’s door? I cannot think why, if they had decided upon this ridiculous and, as it has turned out, this fatal escapade, they did not take Miss Yale’s key in the first place.”

“One of two circumstances might account for that. Either the key was not there when they went to get it, or else they were afraid that Miss Yale would miss it and would institute enquiries. I incline to the first of these theories.”

“Well—granted. Pray continue.”

“Very late on the Thursday night, Mr. Henry and Hamish, concerned by some hints they had received from students who were *not* among the six chiefly involved, instituted a search for Mr. Jones.”

“Yes, but they found that Davy had already been removed from the cellar.”

“As I understood their account, that is uncertain. Having no key, and being unwilling, I imagine, to disturb either the janitor or Miss Yale at that time of night, they attempted to attract Mr. Jones’s attention by calling to him.”

“And received no reply.”

“For what I believe was a good and sufficient reason: Mr. Jones was already dead.”

“*What!*”

“And the students knew that. I think the girl Kathleen was probably the prime mover. I think she was anxious to let Mr. Jones go. Most girls (I do not say all) are notoriously more tender-hearted than boys, and I think she, having the janitor’s key still in her possession, made a journey to the door of the cellar and called out to know whether Mr. Jones was all right. Receiving no reply, she went in search of some, if not all, of the others, and reported that Mr. Jones might be in a state of collapse. As I imagine that he may not have given in to his kidnappers without a struggle, they may well have thought that they had gone too far, and that it would be well to release him forthwith. That is when they found his dead body and also the weapon with which he had been stabbed to death.”

“No, no! It couldn’t have been like that!” said Gascoigne. “They couldn’t have found him *murdered!*”

“I have not finished,” said Dame Beatrice. “Pull my story to pieces when you have heard the rest of it.”

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## CHAPTER 11

### Medley Relay



**B**ut if you are right,” said Gascoigne, “what on earth can have been the effect on those poor children?” He sounded genuinely distressed. “I know who and what they are. Not one of them is what Jerry calls a hard case. Kathleen was an unconvicted shoplifter, sent here by worried parents. I would put her down as a kleptomaniac except that she has pilfered nothing since she has been here. Bill and Julian were expelled from their respective schools for smoking ‘pot’, and John had a nervous breakdown after he and a younger brother had what was reported as a sportive wrestling-match and the brother tumbled over a high balcony and was killed.”

“And John was sent here to recuperate?” asked Dame Beatrice.

“That may seem strange to you,” admitted Gascoigne, “but it made a change of environment for him and, of course, he is not allowed to go back to his home, which was the scene of the accident, until he leaves the College for good. That is my invariable rule and I hoped it had been the salvation of the unfortunate lad.”

“And the other two?”

“Are equally to be accorded sympathy. Benjy was unlucky enough to fall foul at school of a ring of young Jew-baiters. He ran away after having set fire to one of the school dormitories. Nothing got into the papers, but I knew his mother and she persuaded me to take the boy into my care. Shaun, of course, was mixed up in the Belfast troubles. He may have committed, or connived at, murder over there. He was hurt in a street battle, went to hospital and then an uncle in Eire took charge of him and shipped him over here to an elderly great-aunt. She had heard of us and wrote to ask whether we would be willing to take him.”

“The fees here are heavy, of course,” suggested Dame Beatrice.

“Yes,” agreed Gascoigne briefly. He paused and then added, “The great-aunt is the widow of an American millionaire, so there was no difficulty.”

“Now that you have mentioned these students’ names, I remember their case-histories,” said Dame Beatrice. “Of course, you admit that there are three

potential murderers among them.”

“Shaun, perhaps. The other two?”

“The wrestling-match between the brothers may not have been an innocent affair at all, but a deadly struggle. As for Benjy, arson is a crime not far removed from murder if there are people in a house where an incendiary gets to work.”

“And you really think these students discovered Davy’s body?” asked Gascoigne, avoiding the inferences.

“I am sure of it. They discovered it, removed it to the long-jump pit and buried it. They acted, as I have pointed out, in sheer panic. I do not think the stabbing could have produced very much blood, but, of course, I have not seen the body. However, my theory is that what blood there was the students cleaned up. In plain words, I believe they did all that they could to hide the fact that Mr. Jones was killed in the place to which they themselves had assigned him. Judging, you see, from their case-histories, three out of the six had good reason to panic when they found that they had a murdered man to account for.”

“But if they did not do it, who did?”

“I have several theories. In the course of time, one of them will fit the facts.”

“What about the weapon?”

“Ah,” said Dame Beatrice, “that is an interesting question. I think the students must have found the weapon when they found the body. They cleaned the point of it—that heavy metal point which had replaced the original head of the javelin—and replaced the weapon in the locked cupboard. Then one of them (John is the most likely) was so much troubled about the whole affair that he risked going into your trophies cupboard, using Miss Yale’s key, purloined your own javelin, daubed it with red paint and placed it where one of the swimmers or divers was bound to find it.”

“But why? Why?”

“In order to do what he could to assist the course of justice, I assume. These students knew that Mr. Jones had been stabbed with a javelin and, as for John, your notes tell me that he had already suffered a nervous breakdown after he had caused the death of his brother, and I think his conscience (if one can call it that) or, possibly, some theory he had formed as to the identity of the murderer, drove him to make a gesture which clearly indicated by whose hand the murder was committed.”

“He did not think very clearly,” said Gascoigne sourly, “if he thought that *I* had killed poor Davy, but, oh, dear me! I have never attempted to find out exactly what goes on in their minds. That is Henry’s job. It is sufficient for me to



make sure that they are kept busy and happy. But the javelin which did the mischief? How comes it that Henry, Martin and Miss Yale (all of whom have a hand in training that particular squad) did not notice the alteration in the implement?"

"How many students were members of that particular group?" asked Dame Beatrice, as though she was avoiding answering the question.

"I could not say. I should need to ask Henry."

"In any case, I do not think the javelin was altered very long before the murder was committed, otherwise the difference would have been noted and would have received comment. Tomorrow I will talk to Mr. Henry about it. I have learned, by the way, that in addition to his official position as Dean, he is also your partner."

"Yes, that is so. It is by his own wish that his name is not on the College prospectus as such."

"May I ask whether he receives a salary in addition to a share in the profits?"

"Yes, his salary represents the bulk of his emoluments. He has very few shares in the enterprise."

"Would he like more?"

"Dame Beatrice, I am at a loss to interpret the meaning of your questions."

"They may be impudent, but they are not impertinent, I assure you."

"I must give you credit for that, then, and I will answer you. I expect Henry would like a larger share, but he cannot afford to buy more, even on the salary I pay him and, even if he had sufficient money, I am not prepared to relinquish any part of my own holding, so the question really does not arise."

"Did he *buy* such shares as he has?"

"No. They were a gift from me in order to induce him to join my staff."

"How would his salary compare with that of Mr. Jones?"

"Unfavourably, but Davy was a special case."

"Because he was your brother-in-law?"

"Exactly."

"Not because he was in a position to blackmail you?"

"Well, really! You are referring, no doubt, to the unpleasant experience to which I was subjected following the death of my poor wife!"

"Yes, I was." She fixed her sharp black eyes on his angry countenance. Gascoigne capitulated.

"I preferred to keep Davy friendly towards me," he said. "I knew that he was desperately disappointed at having been left nothing under my wife's will. I will

admit that I felt sorry for him. However, to answer a question of which, of course, crudely though you have put it, I can see the relevance, Davy was *not* in a position to blackmail me. Not only had I done nothing wrong, but also Davy, I suppose, was miles away at the time of my wife's unfortunate death and could have known nothing about it until he read the report in the newspapers. He had been with a travelling circus for some time, but they dismissed him for drunkenness. He had begun to insist upon having a safety-net for his act—he was a top-class gymnast, of course—and they knew the unfortunate reason.”

“And did not wish to provide a net?”

“It removed interest from the act. The circus-loving public are there to be thrilled. That is why they like to see a man or woman performing with lions and tigers, a morbid and decadent taste which I do not share. I look upon it as a throw-back to the Roman arena, a...”

“Yes, quite,” said Dame Beatrice. “So did Mr. Henry receive his partnership as an expression of thanks for the way he gave evidence under cross-examination?”

“Really!” exclaimed Gascoigne. “That is a most improper question, Dame Beatrice!”

“I imagine that is the way it must have looked to Mr. Jones.”

“Davy certainly made some unpleasant insinuations,” admitted Gascoigne. “He went so far as to demand a partnership for himself as the price of holding his tongue, but, of course, I could not possibly agree to that. He did quite enough mischief here without the added power of being in a position to interfere in the way the College was run.”

“You must forgive me for pressing the point, Mr. Medlar, but you say that his employers had dismissed him from the circus. Does that mean that he actually *was* in your neighbourhood at the time of your wife's death?”

“He claimed to be,” said Gascoigne sullenly. “I don't know whether he could have proved it and, as it happened, he was so drunk in the witness box that the magistrates refused to listen to what he had to say.”

“But you distrusted him sufficiently to offer him a lucrative post in order to stop his tongue.”

“I know it sounds suspicious, but he could have caused me a great deal of trouble with his lies. All the same, I do assure you that nothing would have induced me to kill him, and I did not do so.”

“Rattled, you think, but more in anger than from a guilty conscience,” said Laura, on the following morning.

“That was my impression, but anger and fear, of course, are very closely allied.”

“Do you think Jones *was* blackmailing him?”

“It is possible, but only mildly, I think.”

Laura grunted and, in return to a look of enquiry from Dame Beatrice, she said, “I’m not so sure about this mildness you mention. A job with no work attached to it—Hamish says Jones was hardly ever in the gym—a fat salary, an assured position, *carte blanche* to behave as badly as he liked without fear of being dismissed—these things add up to the good life with no strings attached, I should have thought.”

“I see your point, but there *was* one string attached to this ‘good life’. He has lost it.”

“Well what’s the next step?”

“I must have a word with Mr. Henry, and then we are bound for the blacksmith’s forge in the village.”

“Oh, you are thinking about the steel point on that javelin. You don’t think it was done in the College workshops, then? Yet Hamish says they are very well-equipped, and are not supervised by the staff.”

“I know; but there might be students who would be interested. The murderer could not risk having any questions asked as to what he was doing with the javelin. Incidentally, I was interested to note that a statement I made during my last conversation with Mr. Medlar went unchallenged.”

“What was that?—and why should he have challenged it?”

“I said that the students who buried the body also returned the lethal javelin to that steel-fronted cupboard, whereas, on Mr. Henry’s evidence, no student has access to it until a member of staff unlocks it.”

“Yes, and what about the forge? Students don’t go into the village, do they? And, even if they did, they’ve no money to pay for a blacksmith’s work or for any other job.”

“No. It narrows the field again, does it not?”

“To the staff, you mean. You’ve thought that, all along. If so, it looks like Barry.”

“Why do you say that?”

“There was the accident to his star long-jumper, and there was the choice of the long-jump pit to bury the body. Both seem to add up to his signature tune.”

“Your first premise is sound; your second is unsound. The students, not the murderer, buried the body. The choice of the long-jump pit as a grave-yard was

arbitrary. The task of burial had to be done as quickly as possible, and the long-jump pit offered the easiest digging.”

“But the body was found so soon. It was bound to be.”

“That did not matter to the students. Their only concern was that it should not be found in a place with which they had guilty associations; and that brings me to my previous point. I told Mr. Medlar that the students not only buried the body, but also cleaned the point of the javelin, and then I expected him to ask me how the javelin was replaced in the locked-up, steel-fronted sports cupboard, but he did not do so.”

“Like me, I suppose the question didn’t occur to him at the time.”

“It is interesting, nevertheless.”

“Yes, indeed, if it’s really true that the students had no access to that cupboard. Strengthens your theory that the murderer is one of the staff.”

“Unless the very useful and dangerous key belonging to Miss Yale will unlock the store cupboard as well as the heating-cellar and Mr. Medlar’s office and ante-room. It is a point which may need clearing up.”

Their conversation was interrupted by an announcement from one of the servants that the police were at hand and would be glad of a word with Dame Beatrice. They had come from attending the inquest on Jones.

“The proceedings are adjourned, ma’am,” said the inspector, “as we knew they would have to be. We’re treating it as a case of murder owing to the body having been buried. We shall be pursuing our enquiries and hope that we can count on your assistance in sorting matters out. A psychiatrist might be very helpful to us.”

“Supposing that the body had *not* been buried, Inspector? You have not identified the weapon, have you?”

“Not as would be to the satisfaction of a jury, no, ma’am, we haven’t. To our way of thinking, though, and with the medical evidence which was given, we think that tarted-up javelin we were shown could have done the trick all right. We reckon that some of the students who were in the know, and whose names we’ve had given us, sneaked into that furnace-room cellar where they’d put him, did for Jones, buried the body and cleaned up the bloodstains, including those on the javelin. That floor had been washed, and the janitor says he hadn’t been down there for weeks.”

“I am in agreement with you, except, of course, that it need not have been those students who killed Mr. Jones.”

“Bit of a coincidence if it wasn’t, ma’am. Some of them might have thought

locking him up like that was a sort of a joke, but others, we reckon, took advantage to pay off old scores.”

“*Somebody* certainly did. That somebody had already, however, turned a sports javelin into a lethal weapon, so, to that extent, the murder must have been premeditated and could not have depended simply upon chance. In other words, Inspector, I think you are barking up the wrong tree when you cite these students as the murderers. I think the real murderer was not prepared to act until he saw a favourable opportunity. I think these students provided that opportunity and for that they are culpable, but that is the sum total of their responsibility.”

“Then why should they bury the body, ma’am?”

Dame Beatrice gave him her theory as to what had actually happened.

“Oh, you think they only *found* the body? Could be, I suppose,” the inspector said dubiously. “Still doesn’t tell us who killed him. We shall be pursuing our enquiries, of course.”

“Then perhaps you can save me a trip to the village. Find out whether the blacksmith knows anything about the new head which was put on the suspect javelin.”

“Oh, we’ve done that, ma’am. Not that we expected anything to come of it. He denies it, of course, and we believe him. That job was done in one of the workshops here. They’re far better equipped than he is. He only does what I call local jobs—horse-shoes for the riding-schools and a bit of tinkering up of this and that. He’s a bit of a jack-of-all-trades. Often leaves a lad at the forge while he takes on other jobs.”

“He had a powerful grudge against Mr. Jones, though. He credited him with the seduction of his daughter, who was one of the maids here,” said Dame Beatrice.

“Can’t see him going into that cellar and stabbing Jones, ma’am.”

“Neither can I, but I *can* see him putting that new head on the javelin and maybe putting two and two together about it, especially if he happened to know that the person who wanted the javelin altered also had a grudge against Mr. Jones.”

“I don’t think you cut much ice,” said Laura, when the inspector had gone. “He’s convinced that those students killed Jones, so what he’ll do now, I suppose, is to ferret out motive. You can’t get a conviction on the motive alone, but he *can* show they had the opportunity.”

“But it may be more difficult to show that they had the means; in other words, that they knew where to lay their hands on a lethal weapon.”

“Obviously he thinks that they put a new point on an old javelin and that the whole thing was premeditated. The trouble about *that* theory is that the whole College seems to have known about the rag, and those six were simply the committee chosen to carry it out. You can’t *wish* yourself on to a committee if the election is properly supervised.”

“That will have occurred to the inspector, no doubt. From that he will argue that, while I may be right about the six and that, while they were responsible for the burial, they were not responsible for the murder, other students took advantage of Mr. Jones’s helpless situation.”

“I wonder why the police are convinced that the staff had nothing to do with it?”

“Naturally their thoughts have turned first to the students, but no doubt the staff will come in for their share of questioning and scrutiny if the inspector convinces himself that the students were not the murderers, but that may take him some time.”

After lunch Dame Beatrice rested until the official College afternoon began, and then she went on to the field in search of Henry. She found him conducting a coaching of the shot-putters.

“I have been talking to Mr. Medlar about the death of his wife,” she said.

“Ah,” said Henry. (“Nuzzle it between the heel of your hand and the side of your jaw, Adrian. Keep that elbow down a bit. Get up to the stop-board, man! You don’t want to lose a couple of feet on your putt.) Sorry to interrupt you, Dame Beatrice, but this ridiculous fellow could reach fifty feet if he’d only manage to get one or two things right.”

“He would still be something short of Randy Matson’s 1967 record,” said Dame Beatrice surprisingly.

“You were saying?” said Henry blankly.

“Why did you give Gascoigne Medlar an alibi for his wife’s death?”

“I didn’t. I merely said, when they cross-examined me, that his wife was quite irresponsible and that her death could have been either accident or suicide.”

“What caused you to give up your work and take a post at Joynings, I wonder?”

“It’s not such very different work, and it’s better paid,” said Henry. “Maybe the people with whom I deal here are not so unfortunate as those with whom I dealt formerly, but the work, I find, is really more to my taste. Murderous young thugs are more interesting, I find, than maladjusted, difficult children. Besides, I

needed a change of environment when my wife died.”

“Talking of murderous young thugs...”

“Yes, it wouldn’t hurt for *you* to take another look at one or two of them,” said Henry, smiling.

“Hamish’s Paul-Pierre, for example, and Hamish’s guardian angel, the pugnacious Richard?”

“Yes, and Barry’s Colin, except that he’s still in hospital.”

“What about Mr. Barry himself?”

“Yes, he had it in for Jones all right. You realize, I suppose, that the police have not lost interest in us? Will you be working in with them?”

“That depends to some extent upon the inspector’s attitude. By the way, I have been thinking about a fact which interested me not a little.”

“Oh? What was that?”

“Bertha’s father is the village blacksmith.”

“I know he is, but I don’t see...”

“I was thinking of the new steel point on one of the javelins.”

“Nobody who had murder in mind would risk having a toss-pot like him to do a job like that. Besides, there is nothing to *show* that the javelin which was tampered with had anything to do with Jonah’s death. If that could be proved. (Leverage, Carlotta, *leverage*, dear!) Right from the soles of the feet! You’re not throwing a stick for a dog! If that could be proved, Dame Beatrice, we could get a whole lot further.”

“How many students are in the javelin group, Mr. Henry?”

“How many? Let’s see now. (Keep the shot under *control*, Matthew, until you actually part with it. Look, like this, old man.) Sorry, Dame Beatrice. How many javelin throwers? Can’t say exactly. It’s apt to vary, because some of them like a change from their own event and tack on to another squad for a bit. Still, on average, I should say a couple of dozen or more turn out for coaching. It’s a spectacular event, you see, and therefore popular. Showing-off is prophylactic here. That’s why we get so little trouble.”

“And you muster only a dozen javelins.”

“Expensive items, you know, and Gassie will only buy the best. Says it’s false economy, if you want results, to fob people off with inferior materials. Our javelins cost up to twenty-five pounds apiece. That’s why it’s so annoying that somebody has mucked one of them up by putting a new head on it. Hang it all, the heads are made of best Swedish steel, anyway.”

“What about ‘practice javelins,’ so-called?” asked Laura. “They wouldn’t

cost more than about five pounds each, would they? And do the girls use the standard eight-hundred grammes, eight-foot-six javelin as well as the men? And what about the boys?"

"Dear me!" said Henry, amused. "Well, to answer your knowledgeable questions, Mrs Gavin, Gassie will not buy 'practice' javelins. Probably mere snobbery on his part, but there it is. Out of the twelve javelins we have in stock, eight are of full length and weight, and four are six hundred grammes in weight and seven-foot-six in length. These are for women and juniors. As nobody here is under sixteen, the youngest ones rate as juniors, not as boys. What happens is that I take my coachings in groups of six, so that no more than half a dozen javelins are in use at one time."

"So that the over-weighted javelin need never have been used since it was altered," said Dame Beatrice. "That certainly clears up one doubtful point."

"Mind you," said Henry thoughtfully, "it can't have been on the rack very long, or surely somebody would have drawn my attention to it."

"This elusive *somebody*!" commented Laura. "Who picks out the javelins which are to be used?"

"Each student, under my supervision—we never let anybody loose in the stock-room—chooses his or her own. They pick up a javelin, weight it by the grip, shake it a bit and then decide upon it or select another. Naturally a wrongly-balanced javelin would be returned at once to the rack."

"So that's the way the cat jumps," said Dame Beatrice. "And no student is unsupervised when he selects his javelin, but you don't dictate his choice."

She nodded, leered kindly at him and went off to find Miss Yale. She discovered the head of the women's side closeted with two students to whom she was giving tea. Dame Beatrice accepted a cup and very soon after her arrival the students, who seemed to find her presence alarming, took their leave.

"I take it you've come about something important," said Miss Yale. "The police were here again, I saw. Don't know what they're bothering about. Who cares what happened to blasted Jonah? The man was an absolute menace. But I don't suppose you came to me for a character sketch of him. Anyway, I'm glad he's dead—and that goes for most of us here. If I'd thought of it soon enough, I'd have murdered him myself, so if you're giving a hard look at the possible starters, you had better count me as one of them. But I'm wasting your time."

"Not at all. I did come, however, on a particular errand. I have been talking to Mr. Henry and he confirms something which I had already gathered."

"Oh, yes?"



“I understand that no man-student is ever allowed to go unsupervised to the cupboard where the javelins are kept. Does that apply equally to the women students?”

“Yes, of course it does. It’s Gassie’s unvarying rule. The girls haven’t the record for violence that comes with some of the men, but Gassie spends the earth on buying the very best sports apparatus obtainable and we’re sworn to cherish it.”

“Does that key of yours unlock that particular cupboard?”

“You can try it, if you like, but it certainly does not. The lock on that cupboard is a special one. There are far too many clever apes in this college for Gassie to risk them picking locks and collecting, for instance, Jerry’s starting-guns.”

“I see. So if the murder weapon was that javelin with the lethal point, only a member of the staff could have returned it to the rack.”

“Well, you didn’t think the students killed Jonah, did you?”

“Have you heard the result of the inquest?” Dame Beatrice enquired. She felt it unnecessary to reply to the last question.

“Yes. Gassie attended and so did the poor kid who first saw Celia’s dogs digging up the body. Open verdict,” stated Miss Yale.

“As a matter of fact, the inquest has been adjourned so that the police can continue their investigations.”

“That’s the story, of course. Means they know it was murder and now they’ve got to pin it on somebody.”

“What made you offer me your own name as, let us say, one of the possibles?”

“Oh, I hated the poisonous reptile. I wasn’t the only one, of course, but I had a key to that stock-cupboard, so I could have got hold of the doctored javelin...”

“But most of the staff had a similar key, had they not?”

“Yes, but they weren’t all interested in the javelins, were they? I say, though, I do wish you’d stop involving yourself in our affairs. I mean nothing personal, but I don’t want bloody Jonah’s murderer brought to book, that’s all. Whoever stuck a spear into that inebriated swine did a public service. That’s the way *I* look at it.”

“Yes, I see. However, with regard to murder, I cannot really approve of it. I will suggest a thought to you in order to cause our conversation to steer a slightly different course, though. You mentioned just now that the staff are not, all of them, interested in the javelins.”

“Well, they’re not, are they?”

“I rather fancy, you know, that we can eliminate Mr. Henry, yourself and Mr. Martin. It seems to me that the last weapon the murderer would have chosen is one which would be connected with him and therefore would seem to point to him as the guilty party. If I thought that the murder was unpremeditated and was done on the spur of the moment, I might think differently, but the lethal point which, to make assurance doubly sure, the murderer had put on to one of the javelins disposes of any such idea. Granted that the students played into the murderer’s hands, there remains the fact that the means of committing the murder must have been provided before the students planned their unkind prank.”

“The killer might have known in advance what their plans were, though.”

“I think not. Their plans could not have been made until they knew that Mr. Henry was going to stage his film show, and *that* seems to have been proposed very much on the spur of the moment.”

“Yes, I suppose it was. I don’t know whether to ask this, but are you getting anywhere with your investigation?”

“I am relying upon help from the staff.”

“But if any of us knew anything we’d have come across with it, wouldn’t we? I mean, surely everybody wants the wretched business cleared up as soon as maybe?”

“That is not what you indicated a few moments ago. However, I have studied Mr. Medlar’s notes on the reputations and personalities of the students, and they have given me no help. Since Mr. Medlar shows no sign of wanting me to leave I have begun a different line of enquiry.”

“Oh, I guessed from the very beginning that you weren’t here just to vet the students. You were hobnobbing with that police inspector and I happen to know that James is your godson and that his father is an Assistant Commissioner of Police. Anyway, in spite of what I said, I think Gassie is wise to have you here, provided he didn’t do the job himself.”

“Why should he have done it?”

“Because Jonah was a pot of poison to him. Did his best to ruin the College, you know.”

“Mr. Medlar could have dismissed him from his post.”

“I’m not so sure about that. Some of us think that Jonah was in a position to blackmail poor Gassie.”

“Had you any grounds for thinking that?”

“Well, some of us thought it was obvious.”

“I think I know what you mean. Mr. Jones retained his highly paid, comfortable post although he neglected his duties, interfered with those of other people, drank to excess, caused bodily injury to students, seduced one of the maids...”

“*And* tried it on with some of the women students, the loathsome animal! But I’m afraid I interrupted you.”

“Not at all. I was only going to add that, in spite of all his sins, Mr. Jones was not only given a permanent post here and a large salary—larger even than Mr. Henry’s or your own...”

“Oh, I’m not complaining. Gassie is a most generous employer. I didn’t know Jonah got more than we do, though. I do know he was given a sitting-room as well as a bedroom. It’s a suite which I used to envy him and which, when you’ve moved on and things have blown over, I shall apply for, unless Henry particularly wants it. I would waive my claim in *his* favour. I’m very fond of old Henry. But I’m babbling on, and you still haven’t reached the climax of your disclosures. What were you going to say?”

“I think some of you on the staff thought that Mr. Jones was in a position to blackmail Mr. Medlar not only because of the reasons we have mentioned, but also because he had already made an attempt to blackmail some of you as well.”

“Well!” exclaimed Miss Yale, not attempting to disguise her astonishment and alarm. “Are our past lives open books, then?”

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## CHAPTER 12

### Richard takes over the Baton



**D**ame Beatrice leered benevolently.  
“You have nothing to fear from me, unless you killed Mr. Jones,” she said.

“If that little devil Lesley has ratted on me, you’d better hear the whole truth,” said Miss Yale.

“No, I beg of you, not at this moment. And Miss Lesley has not so much as mentioned your name to me. Besides, would it not be a case of the pot and the kettle? I am guessing, of course, and at the moment it does not matter whether I am right or wrong. I am glad to have had a talk with you, although all I wanted to know was whether the students ever have unsupervised access to the javelin cupboard.”

“Well, they most certainly have not.”

“Thank you for the extra reassurance. Well,” Dame Beatrice glanced at her wrist-watch, “it is time I went into the village.”

She left Miss Yale and went back to her quarters, but she did not get to the village as soon as she had planned to do. She had changed her shoes and sent a message to her chauffeur and was crossing Gascoigne’s garden towards a wicket-gate which gave a short cut to the lock-up where she kept her car, when she was waylaid by Richard, who appeared to be making for the mansion.

“Good afternoon,” he said. “I say, I think I ought to see Gassie. You wouldn’t come with me, would you?”

“Are you to be carpeted?”

“Oh, no, nothing like that.”

“So you are not in need of protection?”

The enormous student grinned. He said, “You’re in on the ground floor about this Jonah business. Well, young Kirk has been shouting his rat’s mouth off about having inside information about it, and now he’s disappeared. Of course, he may only have run home, but, now we all know Jones was murdered, it seems

a bit fishy about Kirk.”

“Indeed it does,” said Dame Beatrice. “I will wait here while you run to the lock-ups and ask my chauffeur to stand by, as I shall not need him quite as soon as I said.”

Richard went on this errand, and returned shortly.

“Kirk has disappeared?” said Gascoigne, when they had gained his office. “Dear me! I think, Dick, you had better go on to the field and find Henry. I should like him to hear what you have to say. Give Dame Beatrice a chair and then be as quick as you can. I find your news perturbing.”

“Did you ever interview Mr. Kirk?” asked Dame Beatrice, when the young man had gone.

“Interview him? Oh, *interview* him! Good gracious me! I remember now. I sent for him, did I not, and was told that he was at swimming. Something else cropped up and I’m afraid I forgot all about him.

“All I remember saying is that he could wait until I came back. And I didn’t go back. Well, well! How very remiss of me! I never gave the boy another thought. I suppose he came when he was dressed, found that I was not available and waited for me to summon him again, which, quite forgetfully, I did not do.”

Dame Beatrice said nothing and Gascoigne appeared to have no more to add, so they sat in silence to wait for Henry, except that Gascoigne drummed with his fingers on his writing-table and Dame Beatrice took a small notebook out of her handbag and turned over the pages.

Henry did not keep them waiting very long. He came back with Richard, both of them looking as though they had run all the way, as, indeed, they had. Henry took the chair Gascoigne offered him, but said nothing.

“Now, Dick,” said Gascoigne.

Richard stood in front of the writing-table and said, “Kirk hasn’t been to bed and nobody knows where he is.”

“He hasn’t been in Hall, either,” said Henry. “I took it that he’d had a box of tuck from home and was making do with that while the rest of you were having your meals.”

Richard had turned towards him at the sound of his voice.

“Yes, Kirkie doesn’t believe in issuing many invitations when he gets a parcel,” he said. “Did you know the parcels don’t always come from his home?”

“What do you mean?” asked Gascoigne. “There is no reason why they should. Kirk may have other friends.”

“He did,” said Richard, “have other friends. As to reasons, well, it depends

what's in the parcels, doesn't it? One more thing, just to keep you interested: one of Kirk's closest friends, in a manner of speaking, was Jonah, and it was Jonah who brought him the parcels I was mentioning just now."

He faced about and was gone before anything more could be said to him.

"Well, really!" said Gascoigne. "Do you think you should go after him, Henry?"

"As you wish," Henry replied. "My own idea is that he's said all he's going to say. It's up to us now. I think we should institute a search for Kirk. I feel very uneasy about him. Richard's a lout, but he's decent."

"I ought to contact the parents if Kirk has absconded," said Gascoigne.

"I think Richard was suggesting that he had not absconded," said Dame Beatrice. "I did not care for the abstruse reference to Mr. Jones."

"Neither did I," said Henry. "Perhaps, while we're searching for Kirk, you could have a go at Richard, Dame Beatrice. *We* shan't get any more out of him, but *you* might. And, Gassie, I think the staff, not the students, should do the searching."

"Very well, Henry, you know best. You don't *really* think anything has happened to the boy, do you? Anyway, could you organize a film show to keep the students occupied while we search?"

"Unnecessary. It's tea-time. They'll be occupied all right. It won't take us long to look for Kirk if we all join in the search. If he isn't on the premises or in the woods, then you could let his people know. If he hasn't gone home, *and* we don't find him, you will put the police on to it, I suppose."

"Yes, yes. How vexing and worrying it all is!"

"Laura and my manservant will be glad to help in the search, if you could do with two extra people," said Dame Beatrice. "Meanwhile, perhaps you will send over to Mr. Richard's hall of residence and ask him to come and see me as soon as he has finished his tea. It is fortunate that Mr. Jones had a sitting-room of his own. It is ideal for my purpose. I hope Richard will not object to being sent for?"

Richard took his time about coming over, but come he did, just as Dame Beatrice was finishing her second cup of tea.

"Look," he said, "I've said all I can about Kirkie. I didn't like the little runt, but I sort of keep an eye on things here. Done a lot for me, this place has. But, look, I've got things to do. I can't waste time nattering here. I haven't got one other thing I can tell you, so that's that."

"It is good of you to spare your time, Mr. Richard," said Dame Beatrice, not at all put out by his truculent attitude. "Won't you sit down?"

“Can’t stay, I tell you,” said Richard, an armchair creaking in protest as he flung his heavy body into it.

“Don’t tell me you have to see a man about a dog!”

Richard shrugged his broad shoulders. “It was the dogs uncovered old Jonah,” he said.

“Yes, indeed. Tell me what you know about it, will you?”

“I daresay you know as much as I do. Some fellows hid him in the stoke-hole, then somebody—not one of our lot, though—finished him off and our chaps buried him.”

“Let us take your statements in order. Some fellows hid him.”

“Five chaps and a girl. They owned up all right. Henry has their names, if you want them.”

“But, although they incarcerated him, they did not kill him. So far, you and I are in agreement. But tell me something more. Who, apart from those six, knew where he had been imprisoned?”

“I reckon most of us knew. The chaps did, anyway. I don’t know about the girls.”

“Was Mr. Jones generally feared, would you say?”

“By a few, I suppose, but they’d be the girls. Most of us thought he was dirt.”

“Why?”

“Didn’t do his job. Got drunk. Tried it on with women.”

“Could a woman have killed him?”

Richard grinned.

“Ma Yale might have had a go,” he said. “She’s tough enough. She’s used to javelins, too.”

“Nobody else?”

“Shouldn’t think so. Girls don’t go in for pig-sticking.”

“But Miss Yale had no particular quarrel with Mr. Jones, had she?”

“She’s like an old hen with her chicks where our girls are concerned. If she thought Jonah was fooling about with any one of them...”

“But was he?”

“Hard to say. I reckon, though, he had found other fish to fry.”

“You refer to the episode of the maidservant Bertha, no doubt.”

“Besides, our girls were dead scared of him,” Richard continued, ignoring the deplorable episode of Bertha. “Nothing puts young females off like a chap who’s had one too many. Old Jonah’s favourite hymn was, ‘When we gather at the fountain,’ and he did the fountain a bit of no good, I can tell you, once he got

into the Bricklayers' Arms."

"So I have been informed. By the way, I believe the word is 'river', not 'fountain'."

"Tell you something else," said Richard, ignoring this, and seeming to have shed his churlishness. "Old Jonah used to make himself a pain in the neck to Lesley. Always pestering her."

"She is a very beautiful young woman, of course."

"So Jimmy thinks," said Richard. "You ought to tell that lad the facts of life, you know. Lesley isn't the sort his mamma would want in the family if she knew as much about Lesley as *we* do."

"Am I expected to listen to scandal, Mr. Richard?"

"Suit yourself. I like old Jimmy boy and I wouldn't want to see him come a mucker. What's he going to do when he leaves here?"

"Sooner or later he hopes to enter the diplomatic service."

"He's going to get me into the police. Did you know? He's brought my boxing on, too. I wouldn't mind being the police heavy-weight champion. Might box for England. He thinks I could make it if I sweated. But you tip him off about Lesley. Tell him she was sacked from her last job, never mind why."

"How do you come to know anything about it?"

"Kirk told me. That rat knows something about every member of this staff, and that goes for Gassie as well. Makes a hobby of collecting the dirt."

"I am glad we have come back to Mr. Kirk. When did you see him last?"

"I can't remember. All I know is that he didn't sleep in our hut last night. He's in billets with me, you see, so, of course, one noticed."

"Did anyone else remark on it?"

"Only to wonder—joking, you know—whether he'd pulled off his bet."

"What bet would that be?"

"Oh, that, before he left, he'd sleep with one of the wenches."

"One of the women students?"

"That's right. But I knew better. Apart from the fact that the house is locked up well and truly every night, Ma Yale is always on the *qui vive*. Besides, those terriers of Celia's live in the house and they'd yap the place down if anybody tried to break in."

"Yes, I see. Mr. Kirk struck me as a singularly unprepossessing young man."

"He was a heel. I felt bound to stick up for him when Jimmy kicked him, but I soon learnt where I got off."

"You say that mysterious parcels came for Mr. Kirk, but not from his home."



What was in them?”

“Booze. Jonah used to get it for him and smuggle it in.”

“Yes, it had to be either alcohol or drugs,” said Dame Beatrice. “Where did the money come from?”

“Kirk’s mother, I believe. He said he wouldn’t stay here otherwise, I reckon, and his stepfather didn’t want him at home.”

“Surely Mr. Medlar had no inkling of what was going on?”

“Don’t know. He wouldn’t have done anything about it, even if he *had* been wise to it. We all knew that Jonah had him under his thumb. I’ll tell you another thing, too. If Gassie did for Jonah, he might have done for Kirkie. Put that on your needles and knit it.”

“I have already done so, Mr. Richard, but I decided that I had dropped a stitch.”

“How do you mean?”

“Ah, that is my affair. Do you care for chocolate, by the way? I have a large slab here for which I have no personal use. I buy it for Mrs Gavin, but I can get some more next time I go into the village?”

“Oh, well, thanks! What’s this? Bribery?”

“Rather let us call it a reward for virtue. And there is nothing more you can tell me?”

“In return for the chocolate?”

“We agreed, I thought, that you are incorruptible.”

“Well, for what it’s worth—and this is the real reason I went to Gassie about Kirk—one of the shots is missing. Martin told us out on the field and asked whether we knew anything about it. I’m in his squad, you know, and, of course, the staff watch the stock like hawks since that javelin business.”

“One of the shots?”

“Yes, for shot-putting, you know. They each weigh seven point two five seven kilo, or, in plain English, very nearly sixteen pounds. Give you quite a bump on the head if anybody dropped one on you.”

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## CHAPTER 13

### A Shot in the Dark



Martin was giving a coaching to his hammer-throwers. Noting the wide arc which some of the throws covered, Dame Beatrice advanced towards the instructor with caution. As soon as he spotted that she was heading in his direction, however, Martin ordered his squad to abandon practice and went over to meet her.

“I see that you use a standard protection cage,” she said.

“Yes. It’s necessary with tyros. Besides, it *has* been known for the head to fly off the wire, or the wire to part company with the handle. It’s a marvellous event, but could be lethal. It nearly did for the Lord Lieutenant one year, or so I’m told.”

“Indeed? I came not about the hammer, but about a shot which I’m told is missing. It seems to coincide with a missing student.”

“Yes. Richard told me.”

“So there *is* a shot missing?”

“Yes, indeed. I’ve questioned the rest of the staff, the only people who have keys to the stock-cupboard, but I can’t raise any answers that might help.”

“I imagine that a search will be instituted for the missing student. I only hope that Richard’s misgivings will not prove to be well-founded.”

“That somebody bounced the missing shot on the missing student’s head? I could believe anything after this Jonah business. And Kirk is a nasty little bit of work, you know. If he’s been doing any snooping and got on to something connected with Jonah’s death, well, I imagine murderers are not the most squeamish of people, otherwise they wouldn’t be murderers.”

“A just and logical summing up. Tell me, Mr. Martin, how did you come to seek a post here?”

“I was glad to get one anywhere,” said Martin frankly. “My mother is a widow and we were left very badly off when my father died. I got a very poor sort of degree, which wasn’t much of a return for the way she’d seen me through

Cambridge, so when I came down I applied for anything which was going, and came up with this. The advertisement mentioned athletics as a useful side-line, so, as I'd got my Blue, I thought I might stand a chance."

"And you did, it seems."

"Matter of fact, old Gassie jumped at me. It was a very pleasant surprise, I can tell you, and the pay is much better than I ever expected."

"Do you like it here?"

"Very much, especially since James came. I say, what's going to be done about Kirk? Do they think he's skipped? I hope that's all it is."

"Well, a search will be instituted before Mr. Medlar informs his parents that he is missing."

"That means another film show, I suppose. Poor old Henry!"

"Mr. Henry thinks it will be unnecessary to stage a film show. As it is tea-time the students can be left to occupy themselves. Are you proposing to join the search-party?"

"Oh, yes, of course. As I say, I only hope the wretched kid has run home, though, because, if we find him here, I don't think we'll find him alive. He was all kinds of a little snooper and—well, murder often leads to murder, doesn't it?"

Dame Beatrice returned to the house and encountered the searchers who were setting out in couples or threes. This was by Medlar's instructions.

"It will be as well," he had said, "for each of you to have at least one witness if you should come upon anything suspicious concerning this unfortunate lad. I have telephoned the police to let them know that he is missing. I dare not take chances after what happened to Davy."

Laura was with Hamish and they were joined by Martin, who had dismissed his squad to go to their tea. It was Henry and Miss Yale who found the body, Laura who found the shot. There had been no attempt to hide either. The body was seated with its back against the only tree in a little clearing in the woods. The shot was lying in a ditch near by and had been caught up in some brambles.

Henry, who had brought a whistle, blew three blasts on it to call off the search and then he hurried back with the others to report to Gascoigne, who sent at once for Dame Beatrice.

"The police cannot be here just yet," he said. "Nobody has touched the body. Do you wish to see it before the police arrive?"

"I think not. Matters had better be left entirely to them and their surgeon. I hope they will soon be here."

"Yes, indeed," said Gascoigne. "This is a most terrible business. Could there

be any connection between this and Davy's death, do you suppose? The youth was in his squad."

"Oh, I am convinced that there is a connection."

"We cannot be harbouring a maniac, can we?"

"I do not know. There is certainly a ruthless killer in the neighbourhood. It is too early, perhaps, to theorize, but is it possible that Kirk knew something about Mr. Jones's death which he did not disclose?"

"I could not say. As I remarked just now, he was a member of Davy's gymnastics squad, but that would hardly entitle him to be cognizant of all Davy's affairs."

"How many students are accommodated in each hall of residence?"

"There are nine huts. Each holds nine men except for Drake Hall, which houses ten."

"I know that Mr. Richard was a member of Kirk's hall..."

Before the conversation could continue, a maid announced the arrival of the police.

"You reported a missing student, sir," said the inspector.

"His body has been found since first I telephoned," said Gascoigne.

"His body? Where, sir?"

"I will send for Miss Yale. She was present when it was discovered. The Dean is on guard at the spot, and Miss Yale will guide us to it. I waited for you to get here, so I have no details to give you. The assumption is that the boy was hit over the head. We have reason to think that a sixteen-pound shot was the weapon. One is known to be missing from our store and one has been found not far from the body."

"Well, there's one thing," said the inspector, "if ever we had any doubts about Mr. Jones—not that we had—there doesn't seem any doubt about *this* one being culpable homicide, I take it."

"To drop a heavy weight—our shots are of turned bronze of the kind which were first introduced at the Commonwealth Games—on one's own head, seems a bizarre way of committing suicide, Inspector, I must admit."

"May I use your telephone, sir? I had not realized that I should need a photographer and a doctor, to say nothing of a finger-print man. Turned bronze, you say? It ought to yield some useful evidence unless the chap wore gloves, as I expect he did."

Gascoigne led him to the telephone and in a very few minutes he joined them again.

“Will you wait, or shall we go over to the woods?” asked Gascoigne. “I have sent for Miss Yale.”

“I’d like to take a look, sir. Perhaps you would post Miss Yale, after she has guided us, at some convenient spot where she can flag down the police-car and bring my men along. Was the young chap known to have any enemies, sir?”

“He was not popular, but I can think of nobody who would go to the length of killing him, Inspector.”

Miss Yale materialized and guided the small party into the woods and up to the clearing. The dead boy was still seated with his back against the only tree and, except that the top of his head was grievously misshapen, he might have been deeply asleep.

“I can’t do anything until the doctor gets here,” said the inspector. He squatted down and looked closely at the dead face. “Looks as though he’d been given a good crack on the jaw as well,” he said, “a boxer’s knock-out, or something of that sort. I’d say he was killed somewhere else and carried here and positioned before he could stiffen, but that’s only theory. Where did you say you found the weapon?”

“We could do with some help from you, Dame Beatrice,” said the inspector, on the following morning. “Is there anywhere we could talk?”

“Come to my sitting-room, Inspector. I’m sure Mr. Medlar will excuse us.”

“Yes, yes, of course,” said Gascoigne, with whom she had been talking. “I have much to do. I am expecting poor Kirk’s stepfather, and must prepare myself for the interview. It is bound to be difficult. He will have expected me to take better care of the boy. How could I have known, though? How *could* I have known that a terrible thing like this would happen to him? And what are other parents going to think? This could be the ruin of Joynings, the end of all my work.”

“I wouldn’t take too gloomy a view, sir,” said the inspector. “There must be a reason for the young gentleman’s death which would not apply, I daresay, to the majority of your students. All the same, sir, I shall have to question you and your staff as soon as I have had a talk with Dame Beatrice.”

“Yes, of course, Inspector. I am sure that any help any of us can give will be vouchsafed to you freely and willingly.”

“I hope so, sir, I’m sure.” With this not altogether optimistic remark, he opened the door for Dame Beatrice and they repaired to what had been Jones’s sitting-room. “Well, now, ma’am,” he said, when they were seated, “you’ve been acquainted with all the circumstances here as long as I have, and you’ve had the

advantage of living among these people since Mr. Jones's body was discovered. Is it any good asking whether you've come to any conclusions or got any pointers for me?"

"I think one might begin by asking some questions of the eight young men who shared a hut with Kirk."

"Oh, yes, I agree about that. Before I leave here today I'll put them through the usual routine. If they don't come up with anything which helps me, perhaps you'd have a go at them. Any other suggestions?"

"Well, I am convinced, Inspector, that both the deaths were concerned with the staff, not with any of the students except the dead boy."

"You don't think *he* killed Jones, ma'am?"

"I am sure he did not, but I think he brought about his own death because he knew—or thought he knew—the identity of Jones's murderer. I mentioned the staff because, so far, all my enquiries lead me to the conclusion that nobody except a member of the faculty could have obtained access to the store where the javelin and the shot were kept."

"I'll do my own checking on that, ma'am. Some of these youngsters are as clever as a cartload of monkeys, and I wouldn't put it past them to rifle any cupboard or store they'd a mind to take a peek at. After all, it's established that some of them kidnapped Jones and buried his body. I've still got that one to sort out. I heard this morning, before we had this latest development to look into, that the forensic lads have at last got a positive result with that doctored javelin. They got a blood-sample—tiny, but enough for their purpose—which had got trapped between the head of the javelin and the shaft, and it corresponds with Jones's blood-group, so we're assuming with confidence now that it was the murder weapon. The next thing is to find out who put the new head on that javelin."

"And *when* it was done, of course. My own theory was that the javelin was altered only shortly before Mr. Jones's death and was especially prepared with his premeditated murder in mind. I have made enquiries, however, and can prove nothing because, although the College possesses twelve javelins, of which eight are reserved for the students of mature strength, only six are ever in use at one and the same time, and the altered javelin would be automatically discarded when the students chose their implements, so the new steel head may have been put on it weeks ago."

"Yes, I see, ma'am. Well, I'll institute my own enquiries as to that, as well."

"What about the shot which was found in the woods?"

"Oh, it was the murder weapon all right. The doctor is certain of that. Head

injuries seem to take the shape, to a large extent, of the object which caused the injury. In this case, a depressed fracture of the skull corresponds closely enough with the shape of the shot to clinch matters. The young chap was knocked unconscious by a heavy blow to the jaw and then crowned with the shot. He was killed in the lock-up garage which used to belong to Mr. Jones, we think. There's no blood about, but the doctor says a blow from an instrument as large and globular as the one used here, need not necessarily cause much bleeding, or not such bleeding as would cause blood to spurt. The boy's hair was matted and there was blood on his jacket-collar, but that was all."

"And you think the body was carried from the garage to the woods. What made you think of the garage if there are no bloodstains?"

"Because Mr. Jones's car had been moved out and then put back, ma'am. The marks are plain to see and we've also found other marks which indicate that a car was halted at the end of the drive nearest to the woods. Our theory is that the boy was murdered in the garage, conveyed in a car to as close as possible to where the body was found, and then the corpse, probably not quite cold, was placed on the ground as the searchers first saw it. Any of the staff, or any student who had managed to get hold of a staff key, could have unlocked the door of Jones's garage. The locks are all identical. It wasn't Jones's car which was used to convey the body, though."

"So again the staff, rather than the students, seem to be involved. You could not identify any footmarks in the woods, I suppose?"

"With all this dry, hot weather, there wasn't much chance of that, ma'am, and, in any case, the searchers would have made it practically impossible. Those woods have been searched twice since Jones first was missed. We've looked at the tyres of the other staff cars, but haven't hit on the car which must have carried the body. Well, I'll go and get a list of the students in Kirk's hut, and then perhaps you'll give them the onceover if I don't get as much out of them as I should like."

"You have made enquiry at the village blacksmith's about the head which was put on that javelin, have you not? I was about to go and see him myself yesterday afternoon, but I postponed my visit when we knew what had happened to Mr. Kirk."

"Oh, the blacksmith—his name is Potts—denies, as I told you, all knowledge of the javelin, and I've thought all along that whoever did it used one of the College workshops."

"Nevertheless, while you are talking to the hut-companions of Mr. Kirk, I

think I will still go to the village. If you will allow me to mention the death of Mr. Kirk, Mr. Potts may be more forthcoming to me than he was to you.”

“What makes you so sure he did the job on the javelin, ma’am?”

“I am *not* sure, but I think it most unlikely that the alteration was carried out on the premises. The students might not have reported upon the strange activities of another student, but I think there would be rumours, by this time, if anyone else had been seen putting a new head on a javelin, particularly as I have a theory that the murderer may not have had any official connection with the javelin, the shot, the discus or the hammer.”

“So that lets out Miss Yale, Mr. Henry, and Mr. Martin,” said the inspector, consulting a list, “and leaves in Miss Lesley and Miss Celia (although, by the nature of the two crimes, I’d hardly think of considering ladies, anyway), also Mr. Medlar himself, Mr. Barry, Mr. James and Mr. Jerry. Might as well stick a pin in a list like that and just hope for the best, wouldn’t you say, ma’am?”

“No, Inspector, not altogether. There are four outstanding names on your list. They are Mr. Medlar, who, it seems pretty certain, was under Mr. Jones’s thumb to some extent; Miss Yale, who is fiercely protective where the women students are concerned; Mr. Barry, who is known to have entertained feelings of the deepest animosity towards Mr. Jones because of a serious accident suffered, through Mr. Jones’s direct agency, by one of the men-students, and Miss Lesley, who is known to have uttered threats of a lurid and comprehensive kind on her own behalf and also on that of some of the women students.”

“Yale and Lesley in collusion, you think?” hazarded the inspector.

“It is a possibility. How heavy would you think the boy was?”

“Kirk? Oh, not a lot to him. I wouldn’t say he was more than nine stone and could have been less. Two women, or a powerfully-built lady like Miss Yale on her own, could have carried the body easily enough.”

“As could Mr. Medlar or Mr. Barry, then.”

“Yes, oh yes, I should say so. Well, I’ll go and check out that hut, ma’am, while you go into the village.”

Before calling for her car, Dame Beatrice sought out Henry. This involved prising him out from his lecture-room, for which she apologized.

“I won’t keep you a minute,” she concluded, “but has there been any time when you have only counted eleven javelins instead of the usual twelve?”

“No,” Henry replied, “I don’t count them each time and I don’t believe I would have noticed if one had been missing.”

“Thank you. That is all I wanted to know.”



“I can’t be absolutely sure, of course. My custom is to unlock the cupboard, bring in my six men, let them make their selection and return the extra javelins; then I lock up again, and conduct my coaching. I don’t touch the javelins myself except at stock-taking.”

“Supposing,” said Dame Beatrice, struck by another idea, “that Mr. Medlar’s own javelin, the one found in the covered baths, had ever appeared among the collection, would you have recognized it?”

“Not if the metal tag with the inscription had been removed from it, and neither would the students, I think.”

“Would that be an easy task?”

“To remove the tag? Perfectly simple, I imagine.”

“And without it the javelin would look like any other javelin?”

“Oh, yes, of course. Gassie’s javelin is of full standard length and weight. But the inscription was still on it when it was found in the cubicle.”

“Yes, of course.” She took leave of Henry and went to her car, and in a matter of minutes she and Laura were heading down the College drive en route for the village and the forge. It was a good twelve miles from Joynings—far enough, in fact, to discourage the students from walking there and back—but it took less than twenty minutes in the car. The forge seemed to be in the sole charge of a lad of about sixteen, but no work was being done, although the fire was alight. When he saw the visitors the lad said, “Dad won’t be long. He’s down the pub.”

“Where’s the pub?” asked Laura. The boy jerked a dirty thumb.

“Thataways, past the post-office.”

“I’ll go in and winkle him out,” said Laura, when the car reached the inn. “You can’t talk to him in there.”

There were only three men in the bar, including the landlord. Laura went up to the counter.

“I’m looking for the blacksmith,” she said. A short, thickset man turned his head.

“That’s me,” he said. “What did you want done? This is my time for elevenses. Be with you in ’arf an hour.”

“Could you knock off your elevenses for just a minute or two, Mr. Potts? There is somebody outside who would like a word with you. There is no job involved.”

“If it’s somebody after Joe Potts they won’t get no word with ’im. ’E’s in ’orspital.”

“Who are you, then? It was Mr. Potts we wanted.”

“Name of Benson. I’m a specialist, see? I does the fancy ironwork at the forge. I pays Potts for the use of his gear when I has a job on hand.”

“Well, Mr. Benson, you might be able to help us. Won’t you please step outside for just a moment?” The man grunted, turned his back on Laura and finished his beer. Laura put down money on the counter. “A pint for Mr. Benson when he comes back,” she said, “and perhaps this other gentleman will join him. You, too, landlord?”

Benson followed her out to the car, but when Dame Beatrice put her first question he shook his head.

“I wouldn’t know nothing about it,” he said firmly. “Potts told me about it next day. Said a chap brought in a longish bit of smooth wood with as it might be a bit of cord round the middle—well, near enough the middle—and says as how he’d had an accident and snapped off the steel point. He wanted another point put on it, that’s all, but Potts says he can’t manage a job as needs tempered steel and advises him to chuck the stick away and get a noo ’un.”

“So you cannot describe the man?”

“I wasn’t working at the forge that day, so I never set eyes on him. Potts only told me afterwards what he come for. ‘One of that lot up at the College, I reckon,’ Potts says. ‘Ten to one that’s who ’e is. Wants a job done on the cheap, that’s what, but it wasn’t a job I could do; and so I explains to ’im,’ Potts says.”

“He didn’t put a name to the man, by any chance?” asked Laura.

“Not to me he never. ’Cos why? He didn’t know ’im. The only Colleger as we knowed down in the village was Mr. Jones, and it certainly wasn’t him, because Potts would ’ave said so. Not as he knowed, not then, as Jones had got his daughter into trouble. That come a bit later on. But if it *had* bin Mr. Jones, he couldn’t have obliged him, not even knowing him at the pub and *not* knowing then about Bertha being in trouble because of him.”

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## CHAPTER 14

### Coasting round the Bends



I would very much like to have a description of that caller,” said Dame Beatrice, as they drove back to College. “I think we must find out to which hospital Potts has been admitted and whether he is permitted visitors other than his family. However, that will have to stand over, because the inspector will be awaiting our return.”

The inspector had finished with the students by the time they reached the College and was enjoying mid-morning coffee and biscuits in the senior common room with Henry and Miss Yale.

“I can’t get anything out of those lads,” he said, when the tutors had gone, “so perhaps you’d have a go at them, Dame Beatrice. Whatever they know about Kirk, they’re not letting on, not to me. Here’s a list of their names, and I can point out their particular hut.”

“I obtained no useful information either,” confessed Dame Beatrice, “except a further denial that the repair or reconstruction of the suspect javelin was ever done at the forge.”

“Same answer as *I* got, and it’s likely enough. The man, whoever he was—and he must have some connection with the College—would be a fool to get a job like that done locally.”

“Apparently Potts and this man Benson *thought* he came from the College, and it seems that he did make an *attempt* to get the work done locally, all the same. Benson mentioned the visitor who brought the javelin to the forge but could not describe him, as he was not at the forge at the time. Did you know, Inspector, that Potts is in hospital?”

“No, I didn’t. Which hospital?”

“I did not ask, but I thought you might be willing to find out. The official approach will probably intimidate his wife, whereas my own approach would not.”

“Not that I’ll get much out of him, even if I do visit the hospital, I’m afraid,”

said the inspector. "It's the newspapers, you know. Somebody must have sold them the story of Jones's death and, once the javelin was mentioned in print, Potts, I expect, has shut up like a clam. Thinks the murderer will have something on him, I reckon, if he ever lets out that he was offered the javelin for repair. I suppose you believe this man Benson? He wasn't at work the day I went to the forge, either, so I've never met him."

"He says he rents Potts's apparatus occasionally, and I cannot see why *he* should lie about the javelin, although, to you (and to me, I expect, if I had asked him) Potts did. Benson had not seen the javelin, of course, but to a certain extent he was able to repeat Potts's description of it. I do not suppose it is a familiar implement so far as the villagers are concerned, so he would hardly make up this tale."

"Don't suppose the majority of the villagers have ever seen such a thing," agreed the inspector. "Well, I think you've got hold of an important and useful bit of information, ma'am, with which I shall confront Potts as soon as I'm allowed to see him, and that may be a whole lot sooner than he would like. I'm much obliged to you, ma'am. Do you want to see those boys now, or will you wait a bit?"

"I'll wait. When they have had time to think and talk over your own visit, they may be the more willing to tolerate mine. For the rest of the morning and, doubtless, for much of the afternoon, I shall be busy with other matters. Do you know whether Mr. Kirk's stepfather has arrived yet?"

"Expected at about half-past three this afternoon, ma'am. Mr. Medlar received a wire while you were out, and would like us both to be at the interview. I think Mr. Medlar feels that he would like our support, although he did not exactly say so."

"He has my sympathy. I shall be on call, then, from three-thirty onwards. When was Mr. Kirk killed?"

"According to our surgeon, somewhere between ten on the night before yesterday and two o'clock yesterday morning. Would you like a word with him, ma'am?"

"It is not necessary. The times he gives are reasonable enough. The deed, of necessity, would have to be done after dark. I wonder what the excuse was?"

"The excuse, ma'am?"

"For getting Kirk to come out of his hut at night. I have an idea about it, of course. During a conversation I had with one of the students, it seems that Mr. Jones was in the habit of keeping Kirk supplied with drink and cigarettes. I think

that maybe the murderer was blackmailed into taking his place.”

“I wish I had known that when I tackled those lads this morning! Do you know, I believe I’ll go right back there and roast them! I take it Mr. Medlar wasn’t a party to such goings-on?”

“Oh, I am sure he was not. I did not tell you until after you had seen the young men, because now they will not be expecting another call from you, and therefore your second visit will take them unawares. By refusing information to you so far, they have turned themselves into hostile witnesses and may be treated as such.”

“That’s clever of you, ma’am, but shan’t I queer your own pitch if I tackle them before you’ve spoken to them? I’ve been told to give you every facility.”

“I wait upon your decision, Inspector.”

“Well, then, ma’am, I think you should take first knock. Here is the list of names. While you’re sorting this lot, I’ll find out which hospital Potts is in. I know where he lives, and his wife will tell me whether it’s the local hospital, which I think it’s bound to be, and what’s the matter with him. Good luck, ma’am. You’ll need it if you’re to get anything useful out of those boys.” He left her and Dame Beatrice studied the list of names. She was interested to note that those of Paul-Pierre and the taciturn Neil, as well as that of Richard were on it. The rest of the names were not those of anybody whom Hamish had mentioned in his letters home.

She went first to Henry’s lecture-room in which hung the full time-table of lectures and coachings, for Henry, she knew, was largely responsible for organizing this part of College life while Gascoigne dealt with business matters, correspondence, complaints and parents. Henry was lecturing to a class which consisted of five inattentive girls and seven lethargic young men, and he seemed grateful instead of irritated when Dame Beatrice interrupted his discourse.

“Mean we can go, Henry boy?” asked a front-row youth, speaking with what Dame Beatrice recognized as an unusual degree of politeness for a student at Joynings.

“Suit yourself, Frank,” replied Henry; whereupon the group collected its books and charged for the door. “They only come because they think it’s good for me to have an occasional class,” said Henry tolerantly. “And now what can I do for you, Dame Beatrice?”

“I should wish to congratulate you, first, on your popularity here. Secondly, all I came for was to find out where these students are likely to be at this hour.” She produced the list which the inspector had given her. “You have a complete

time-table, I believe.”

“Ah, but where our students are supposed to be, and where they actually are,” said Henry, “is one of those Alice in Wonderland things, you know. Still, for what it’s worth—” he studied her list—“Richard will be with James, to whom he remains faithful, especially since eleven more girls have decided to take French and German; Paul-Pierre will be with Martin for mathematics—he is the instructor, I may add, and Martin the pupil—and I expect you will find Neil with Miss Yale. Ideally he should be at physics with Jerry, but he is teaching Miss Yale to knit.”

“Dear me!” said Dame Beatrice. “So the devil a monk would be! Two devils and two monks, in fact. I shall never again be surprised at what goes on in this College. Does nobody instruct Hamish?”

“The girls would like to do that, I expect,” said Henry, with his gentle smile. “Of the others on your list...”

“Thank you so much, but I think I can make shift with Paul-Pierre and Neil. Richard has already talked to me.”

“He’s a good chap, is old Richard. We shall miss him when he goes.”

Dame Beatrice went first to Miss Yale’s lecture-room and found Neil upbraiding that formidable lady as he ‘took back’ the last few rows of what appeared to be a Fair Isle sweater in the making.

“I forbade ye to go on wi’ it when I wisna by tae see ye were daeing it richt,” he was saying sternly.

“Sorry,” said Miss Yale. “Thought I’d got the hang of the pattern by now.”

The door was wide open, but Dame Beatrice tapped on it politely before she advanced into the room.

“So very sorry to interrupt,” she said, “but as soon as Neil is at liberty I would be glad if he would spare me a moment.”

“I’ll come the noo,” said Neil, laying aside the knitting, “gin this disobedient woman will agree tae leave well alane until I will be back. I’m thinking ye’re wanting to speir at me about wee Kirkie,” he added, as he and Dame Beatrice reached the open air and began to cross the Warden’s garden. “Is it true the puir mannie is deid?”

“Quite true, I’m afraid. As he slept in your hall of residence, I wondered whether you could suggest any reason why somebody murdered him.”

“Och, then, there’s mony that micht hae had reason for it. Aye, and the tutors, too, for the matter o’ that.”

“Did any of you—I am not asking for names—but did any of you ever leave

your hall of residence at night?”

“Why would we be daeing that?”

“I can think of no reason, but I thought perhaps you could tell me how or why Kirk was not in bed the night before last.”

“Kirk had a bet he wad sleep wi’ ane o’ the lasses, but we a’ kenned that wis naething but wishfu’ thinking. Save for mysel’, they’re a’ too scared o’ yon auld body ye took me from. Losh! But she’s a deevil when she’s roused up!”

“But Mr. Kirk apparently did not think so, if he took on such a wager.”

“Did he not? I’m thinking that he did. All the same, gin ane o’ the lasses was willing—and some would be willing to bed doon wi’ Kirk sooner than wi’ naebody at a’, ye ken—the way wad be tae bribe a servant tae leave the back door o’ the hoose open so that a man could be slipping up the back stairs and no tae be ganging past the draygon’s room the way she wad be hearing him.”

“But the students have no money for bribes, or so I was given to understand.”

“Kirk had siller and tae spare. His mither sent it to the mon Jones, I’ll be thinking. Aye, Kirk and Jones was awfu’ thick. Weel, noo, seeing that the baith o’ them are deid, there’s nae harm telling ye. Kirk was oot of our hut the nicht Jones was killed, as well as the nicht ye’re speiring aboot.”

“Trying to get into the College building?”

“I dinna ken. It might be that, or, more likely, it might be tae get into Jones’s garage.”

“Why should he want to do that?”

“The drink, ye ken, was still in Jones’s car. The gomerils wha shut Jones up didna ken aboot the bottles—Kirk’s bottles that Jones ordered for him at the pub and Kirk’s folk paid for—and the seven of them in the hut were no sae wrang in the heid that they wad gang against the whole College and let Jones oot.”

“I thought there were nine of you in the hut.”

“Richard and mysel’ we didna drink or smoke, ye ken.”

“How about Paul-Pierre?”

“Och! That yin!” said Neil. He laughed unpleasantly. “Aweel,” he went on, “I’ve told ye a’ I ken, so I’ll be ganging back to the auld draygon and her knitting.” Without more ado he turned about and broke into a trot as he headed back to the house. Dame Beatrice cackled. She felt she had done well by beginning her line of enquiry with Neil, but that it would be as well to get his evidence confirmed. As she turned back towards the main College building an eruption of students occurred. She stood out of their way and collared Paul-

Pierre as he came abreast of her.

“Madame?” said Paul-Pierre, stopping politely in his tracks.

“When you have had your lunch, monsieur, I would be glad of a word with you.”

“You would grill me, as that policeman did?”

“You may have some knowledge which you would be willing to share with me, perhaps.”

“With you, madame, I would be willing to share *anything*, even my life,” declared Paul-Pierre cheekily.

“Splendid. In the sitting-room which used to belong to Mr. Jones, then, if you will be so good.”

“Parfaitement, madame. A quelle heure?”

“A quatorze heures, s’il vous plaît.”

“Il me plaît bien. Au revoir, chère madame. C’est depuis deux années que je suis invité au salon d’une duchesse.” With an exaggerated gesture he seized Dame Beatrice’s yellow claw and raised it to his lips.

“Why did you knife your science master?” asked Dame Beatrice, when they met again at two. Paul-Pierre waved eloquent, spade-like hands.

“We disagreed,” he said, “and I was right. He asks me to define the nature of cathode rays. He does not accept my definition, but me, I know I am right. I convince myself, so how is it I do not convince him? So I say it with knives. That do not convince him either, and I am kicked out of the school. Just like that! For nothing! For one little snick on his face to prove to him I am right. But what of it? Those who have right suffer always.”

“That is both sad and true. But I must not waste your rest-time. Do you swim this afternoon?”

“But yes. What do you want with me?”

“Confirmation, or the reverse, of some information I received this morning.”

“So?”

“Yes. I am afraid it is what lawyers would call a leading question, but I am anxious not to keep you longer than is absolutely necessary. You will remember that Mr. Jones was kidnapped and incarcerated by some of the students?”

“But not by me. I do not care for these childish entertainments.”

“Nor I. But can you remember which night it was, at just about that time, that Mr. Kirk left the hall of residence to go in search of certain bottles which were thought to be in the boot of Mr. Jones’s car?”

“But certainly. Mr. Jones goes to the *estaminet* on the Tuesday, but he is



kidnapped on the Wednesday and it is only in the dark, which comes very late at this time of the year, that we can bring in the bottles. So by the Thursday we are all very thirsty and we say to Kirk what about these bottles and to go out and bring them in, or we shall all beat him up. So he go, but still we get no bottles because there is no way he can break into the garage without a staff key.”

“And did you beat him up?”

“Oh, no, we would not do a thing like that. It was only a threat, although we make Kirk think it was true. You see, that big, ugly fellow Richard says, when Kirk has gone to try to get the bottles, that if anybody lay a finger on the little rat, he, Richard, will have their guts for garters. That is an English saying. How bestial are the English! So, when Kirk come back and look frightened, we think it is the beating-up he fears, but when, later, the dogs find Mr. Jones, I think to myself that maybe Kirk find out something else besides that the garage cannot be opened. I think he go over to the stoke-hole and spot the person who has just murdered Jones.”

“He went to ask Mr. Jones for his key to the garage, I presume.”

“That is the way I think.”

“Thank you,” said Dame Beatrice. “Kirk never told any of you that he had seen something suspicious that night?”

“No. In the morning we sneak Lesley’s key to the garage. Quite simple. Two of us distract her attention with wild talk of love while another takes her handbag and finds her car keys with which she has a key to her garage, and we find the key will fit Jones’s garage, so we manage to get our bottles after all.”

“And Miss Lesley’s keys?”

“Oh, those we return. We are men of honour. I do not think she knows they were ever borrowed. Students, you understand, are very clever people.”

“You have been of great help,” said Dame Beatrice, “but I believe there is one more thing which you can tell me, if you are public-spirited enough to do so.”

“The public school I know, and the public-house and the public library. All those. What is this public spirit?”

“I cannot define it. You have a French expression *esprit de corps*, but I do not believe it means quite the same thing. Suppose I said, ‘General goodwill’, would that convey anything to you?”

“I do not think we would understand that term at Joynings, but ask your question.”

“Since the death of Mr. Jones, has the consignment of bottles ceased to be

delivered?”

“But no. I think that his murderer give us them.”

“Under pressure, of course.”

“Of course. I suppose Kirk—now this is a word I do not know in English—”

“Allow me to supply it in French. Kirk had become the *maître chanteur* of the murderer. In other words, Kirk was blackmailing him. You don’t know his name, I suppose?”

A maid came in just as Paul-Pierre was shaking his head.

“The inspector, madam,” she said.

“Show him in, please.”

“I go,” said Paul-Pierre hastily.

“That lad,” said the inspector, “will come to a sticky end, ma’am. Well, I’ve found out the hospital, but I was too late to talk to Potts.”

“He has been discharged?” asked Dame Beatrice.

“No, ma’am, not in the sense you mean. I’m sorry to say that he’s dead.”

“Dear me! His partner, Benson, gave me no inkling that he was so seriously ill.”

“Not ill, in the sense you mean, ma’am. He’d had a nasty knock on the head.”

“Foul play?”

“Doubtful, it seems. What happened was that one night, about a week ago, his wife heard her chickens squawking, so she made Potts get up and see what was upsetting them, whether it was a fox got into the hen-house or a thief. Seems they’d lost chickens before. Well, he was so long gone that she became alarmed, so she went next door—it’s a row of half-a-dozen brick-built cottages—to ask the neighbour to help her investigate, as she didn’t like the idea of going right down to the bottom end of the garden by herself in the dark. The chap obliged, taking a poker with him in case of any rough stuff, and he also had a lantern. The hens started up another panic as the pair reached the chicken run, but there was no sign of Potts there. They didn’t like to call out his name for fear of waking the other neighbours, but they found him at last lying unconscious on the ground outside the back-door earth-closet. They got the doctor to him and the doctor himself drove Potts to the hospital, but he died this morning without ever recovering consciousness, so, even if I’d got to him sooner, it still wouldn’t have been any good, even if he’d been willing this time to answer my questions.”

“But what caused the injury?”

“The roof of the earth-closet was of slates and one of them was lying near

the body.”

“But we have had no winds high enough to bring down slates, Inspector.”

“Oh, the roof was in a very bad state. I’ve seen Potts’s wife and she says they were going to repair the roof before the winter set in, but Potts wasn’t keen on doing jobs around the house and always put them off as long as possible. ‘And now he’s paid for it,’ she said. There will be an inquest, of course, but I think the verdict will have to be death by accident.”

“Do you think it was?”

“Chickens don’t suddenly start panicking at dead of night, ma’am, unless there’s a reason for it.”

“But it could have been that a fox was in the neighbourhood, I suppose.”

“My guess would be that the fox had only two legs, ma’am, but I doubt whether I’ll ever be able to prove it. It’s too much of a coincidence that, out of all the village, the chap who could recognize a murderer should die.”

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## CHAPTER 15

# The Finishing Straight



**K**irk's step-father was a grim-faced man in his late forties. "But I don't understand it," he said. "Granted the lad wasn't everybody's money—he wasn't mine—but why should anybody want to kill him?"

"Because he was blackmailing a murderer," said Dame Beatrice.

"Blackmailing? He had no need to do that. Much against my advice and, I understand, against the rules of the College, my wife was always sending him money addressed to a Mr. Jones."

"He did not blackmail for money."

"What other reason is there for blackmail?"

"In this case," said the inspector, "we have reason to believe that your stepson knew the identity of Mr. Jones's murderer, and blackmailed him into bringing into the College drinks and cigarettes which your wife's money provided. Jones, we suppose, acted on a commission basis with the connivance of the landlord of the village pub. When Jones was killed, his murderer was persuaded to take over."

"I knew no good would come of supplying Kirk with money, but my wife wouldn't listen to me. A fine kettle of fish has come of it!"

"Now, sir," went on the inspector, "when your boy wrote home, did he ever give you any hint, even the slightest, that he knew who had killed Mr. Jones?"

"I've no idea. He wrote to my wife, not to me."

"And she never showed you his letters?"

"No. I never suggested that she should, and she certainly never offered that I should read them. She doesn't forgive me that I ever got Kirk sent here. She wanted to have him at home with a tutor when he was expelled from school, but I knew better, or thought I did. I didn't hit it off with the lad or he with me. To my mind he was a psychopath, foul-tongued and cruel and dirty-minded. Got it from his father, I imagine. Asked for trouble and was expelled from school, but

naturally I never thought he'd be in any danger in a place like this."

"I'm afraid he ran into danger of his own accord, sir. He ought to have had more sense than to think he could boss a man who'd already committed murder. I'm afraid I shall have to accompany you to your home, sir, and ask your wife to produce your step-son's letters or, if she hasn't kept them, to tell me what was in them."

"I've no objection, but I doubt whether she'll be able, or even willing, to help you."

"Surely she'll be willing to help us lay our hands on her son's murderer, sir."

"Oh, well, if you put it like that..."

"Are you going to attend the inquest, sir? We shall need evidence of identification. There's no doubt about it, but the formalities will have to be observed."

"There will be an adjournment, I suppose?"

"Unless we can name the murderer in two days' time, sir."

The inspector returned on the following noon and reported to Gascoigne, Henry and Dame Beatrice that he had drawn a blank at Kirk's home. The mother had not kept the boy's letters, but she stated that Kirk had referred only once to Jones's death. Since it occurred, her son had asked her to direct any of her own letters which contained money to a poste restante at the village post-office, and to address the envelopes to a Mr. Harper.

"None of the staff is called Harper," said Gascoigne quickly.

"No, but the woman at the post-office will be able to give me a description of the man who called for the letters," said the inspector. "I think we're getting to the end of the road, sir."

This proved not to be the case. The post-mistress produced three envelopes addressed to Mr. Harper and stated that nobody had been along to claim them.

"Whoever the chap is," said the disgruntled inspector to Dame Beatrice, "he was too fly to chance being recognized at the village post-office, which meant they knew him and could put his real name to him. He must have planned young Kirk's death from the minute the lad began to turn on the heat. He played along with Kirk, but only while he waited for the right opportunity. He was buying the drinks and smokes out of his own pocket, I suppose, without letting Kirk know that the letters were not being collected."

"Then the landlord at the pub will be able to furnish you with a description of him," said Henry. The inspector shook his head.

"So I thought, sir," he said, "but that road is closed, too. Twenty pounds in

used one-pound notes was put through his letter-box with a note in Roman capitals saying that the drinks and cigarettes were to be left at the College main gate as early in the morning as possible, and that when the money was exhausted a note to that effect was to be left in an empty packing-case. Well, according to the landlord, there was only a pound of the money left after he'd delivered the stuff a couple of times. He showed me the pound note, but, of course, being a used one, it told me absolutely nothing. No use for prints or anything else. I suppose, sir," concluded the inspector, turning to Gascoigne, "there's no chance that any of your staff or students might have seen something?"

"Seen something, Inspector?"

"Seen who went and picked up the stuff at the gate, sir. It would have to be somebody with a car, I imagine, because anyone lugging a packing-case of drinks up to the College would have been an object of interest, I take it."

"Not if it took place after dark, Inspector."

"A car means a member of staff," said Henry. "I think, you know, Gassie, that the inspector would probably like to question each one of us again, now that it seems most unlikely that the murderer could be one of the students."

"I have the utmost confidence in my staff," said Gascoigne, with an uncertainty in his voice which went far towards denying the truth of this statement, "but the inspector knows his own business best."

"I don't wish to interview members of your staff again just yet, sir," said the inspector. "That can come a little later. Dame Beatrice has another enquiry in mind, and one which she prefers to hold without my direct assistance. If the outcome is what she hopes for, it will not be long before I can make my arrest."

"Oh? What does she propose to do?"

"That, sir, remains her business and mine for the present."

"Oh, very well," said Gascoigne stiffly. "I have no wish to pry."

"It's not that, sir. The point is that we've had two deaths by murder, and there's a strong probability that there's been a third. I wouldn't want Dame Beatrice to run the risk of becoming victim number four. The murderer is an intelligent amateur, as a great many murderers are. She thinks she knows who he is, but we still need proof, and the ultimate proof will probably have to be his own confession, so far as I can see, and how she hopes to get that, well, I really don't know. However, she's the psychologist, not me."

"But is he likely to confess?" asked Henry.

"When we have laid our conclusions before him perhaps he will have no option, sir, being the kind of emotionally disturbed man she thinks he is."

“What did you mean about a third murder?” asked Gascoigne.

“One we shall not even seek to prove, sir, since we have come to the conclusion that we shall get nowhere with it. I refer to the death of Potts, the village blacksmith. He was hit over the head by a slate from the roof of an outhouse—to be plain, the earth-closet—in his own back-yard. We would dismiss the occurrence as a complete although fatal accident, except that we have reason to believe he could identify the murderer as a man who approached him some time ago with the offer of a rather special job.”

“What job? You don’t mean...?” said Henry.

“Yes, sir. It seems that the murderer may have approached Potts with an order to put a new steel head on that particular javelin we know of. Potts probably turned it down as being the kind of job he was not equipped to undertake and I daresay he forgot all about the incident, but if the murderer realized that we were beginning to take an interest in Potts, he may have decided to eliminate him. We can’t prove it, as I say, so we’re ignoring it, but it makes an extra pointer, all the same, as Potts, if it had been brought back to his recollection, might be in a fair way, as I said, of being able to identify (or, at least, to describe) the customer who had made enquiries about the javelin. Of course it’s too late for any of that now.”

“I did not care to offer the suggestion earlier,” said Gascoigne, “but when at last I had convinced myself that Davy had been deliberately murdered, I thought Potts was the most likely person to have committed the crime. He came here, you know, and made a very great fuss, and accused Davy of having seduced Bertha Potts, one of our maids, and of having got her with child.”

“Oh, but the murderer couldn’t have been Potts,” said Henry. “How would he know that the students had shut Jonah away in the stoke-hole? How would he get a key to it? How would he get hold of a javelin out of my stores?”

Gascoigne did not reply. Dame Beatrice, who had been, hitherto, the silent member of the company, said, as she glanced at her watch, “Well, I must be on my way. You will excuse me, Mr. Medlar, I am sure, if I am not back in time for dinner in hall. I may not return, in fact, until tomorrow morning.”

She collected Laura and her car and asked to be taken to the local hospital.

“What’s in the parcel?” asked Laura, looking at a large, square, narrow package which was propped up on the front seat beside George, the chauffeur.

“A photograph of the staff of Joynings College before Hamish took the place of the man called Merve whom the students injured,” Dame Beatrice replied.

“What do you want me to do when we get there?”

“To take down all that is said.”

“Verbatim?”

“If your shorthand will stand the strain.”

“What do you think you pay me for?”

“Chiefly for the pleasure of your society.”

The town was not a large one, and the hospital was a bungalow-type building standing in pleasant, tree-planted grounds. Dame Beatrice was expected (the result of an official telephone call from the inspector) and was greeted by the matron in a spacious vestibule just inside the front door.

“Yes, Colin Dawson is getting on very nicely,” she said, in response to an enquiry from Dame Beatrice. “We think he may be able to try out his crutches next week. Did you wish to see him?”

“No, I think not. You have been told, Matron, that I am assisting the police, have you not?”

“Oh, certainly.”

“I wonder how many people you can identify in this photograph?”

George, who had carried it in, unwrapped the parcel. He returned to the car with the wrappings while Laura and Dame Beatrice held up the large, heavy frame for inspection.

“Let us go into my office,” said the matron, “then we can put it down on a table while I study it. I really need my glasses.”

She did not take long to make up her mind. “This man,” she said, pointing to one of the two faces in the picture which were unfamiliar to Dame Beatrice and Laura, “was a patient here fairly recently. We understood that he had been in a fight with some ruffians. His injuries were extensive but fortunately not serious.”

“Did he have any visitors while he was here?”

“Yes, several, including his uncle, and twice he was visited by this man.” She indicated another figure in the photograph. “He also—this man—came to see Colin Dawson two or three times and seemed very distressed by Colin’s accident, for which he blamed himself bitterly, saying that if he had not taken an entirely unnecessary holiday the accident would never have happened.”

“You cannot possibly remember the date of his first visit to Colin, I suppose?”

“Not to a day, but it was very soon after Colin was admitted, I do remember that much. Colin’s mother came the same day, so the ward sister kept this man outside until the mother left, as we did not want too many visitors at one time while the poor boy was still in a state of shock.”



“And the man came again after that, you say?”

“Oh, yes, more than once, I believe. The ward sister would know more about it than I do. You would like to have a word with her, would you?”

“Very much indeed.”

The ward sister was no more certain of definite dates than the matron had been. She picked out the same two men from the photograph and then put a finger on Gascoigne.

“Only once,” she said, “but he came and brought flowers and some beautiful hot-house grapes.”

“How long ago?” asked Dame Beatrice.

“Oh, right at the beginning, before anybody else at all— any other of Colin’s visitors, I mean, including his mother and this other man.”

“Thank you, Sister.” Dame Beatrice took farewell of the matron and returned to the car with Laura, who was carrying the photograph.

“Did you get what you wanted?” Laura asked.

“Yes, I did.”

“Anything the lawyers can tell the jury?”

“No, child.”

“So, really, we’re no farther on.”

“You are wrong. The case may well be solved and the murderer may even confess.”

“Why may he?”

“Because he is what the inspector called him, an intelligent amateur. He will be too intelligent not to recognize the justice of my findings, and too much of an amateur to realize that I have no proof of what I say. I cannot prove that he had the new head put on the javelin, and I cannot prove that he was the man who used the javelin to kill Mr. Jones. I cannot prove that Kirk was blackmailing him, unless he himself chooses to admit it. I cannot even prove that he was the man who so foolishly went to the forge.”

“Well, honestly, I think he’ll be a fool if he confesses.”

“He *will* be a fool,” said Dame Beatrice, “but I believe he’ll do it.”

“I take it that one of the faces we didn’t recognize was that of Jones,” said Laura. “The other one, I suppose, must have left the college before we were dragged into all this.”



“One of Colin’s visitors was certainly Barry,” said Dame Beatrice.

“Oh, but we knew that, didn’t we?” said Laura, looking puzzled.

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## CHAPTER 16

### Breasting the Tape

W e've plenty of time to get back to the College for dinner," said Laura, settling herself beside Dame Beatrice on the back seat of the car when she had wrapped up the picture and placed it on the front seat.  

"Plenty of time, but no inclination, so far as I am concerned," said Dame Beatrice. "We shall return to Joynings in the morning after I have telephoned Mr. Medlar to find out when he will be prepared to receive us."

"Are we going to spend the night at home, then?"

"No. I have to see my son. He is expecting us at his house in Hertfordshire."

"Oh, well, that's not so far away as the New Forest, anyway." Laura, who, with all her bluntness, had the instinctive courtesy she had inherited from her Highland ancestors, asked no more questions. They dined with Sir Ferdinand Lestrangle, his wife and grown-up children, and then Ferdinand took them off to the library.

"I've managed to get most of the information you wanted, mother," he said. "There seems to be nothing wrong with Martin Bagshaw, Gerald Wicks or Celia Jenkins. Of the others, well, you've heard about Gascoigne Medlar's wife and that it was Henry Collier whose cross-examination by a prosecuting barrister in the magistrates' court turned in favour of the defence and prevented Medlar's having to stand trial."

"I don't think there's anything wrong with Henry," said Laura. "Hamish likes him, and Hamish has always been a very good judge of character."

"Yes, but, of course, Mr. Medlar's gratitude did take the form of making Henry a partner in the very lucrative Joynings enterprise," Dame Beatrice pointed out.

"But that means Henry stood to lose if Jones's bad behaviour ended by wrecking the College," said Laura, "and he would hardly want to do that. So pass, Henry! All's well."

"What about the others?" asked Dame Beatrice, turning to her son. "Did you

obtain further information?”

“Lesley Cartwright lost her job as a result of a fatal accident at the grammar school where she was in charge of the dancing and gymnasium classes. The accident was directly attributed to her negligence, and the child’s parents sued her. She got off, but had to resign her job and was glad to get a post at Joynings. Miss Yale was head of a big boarding-school for girls in the Midlands. She led a holiday expedition in the Cairngorms and lost two children who fell to their deaths in thick mist. She gave up her headship and was content to find a refuge at Joynings. Barry Fitzroy was a house-master at a minor public school, and was one of those unfortunates who cannot help forming emotional relationships with boys. There was some sort of scandal—I can’t get precise details and I don’t think they would help you, even if I could, but it appears that some boys blew the gaff to their parents and Barry had to leave. He, too, was glad and lucky to get a post at Joynings.”

“His devil may have pursued him even there,” said Laura.

“How do you mean?” asked Ferdinand.

“I think he could have got himself emotionally entangled with Colin. It could have been that, as I see it, which made him so furious when Colin was injured. He was known to be fond of the boy.”

“Be all that as it may,” said Dame Beatrice, “it became increasingly clear to me, as it has to you, my dear Laura, that it was not to the advantage—indeed, it was very much the reverse—of any of the staff to destroy the College, and I can think of nothing which would be more likely to do that than the murder of a member of that staff, followed by the murder of one of the students. However, by this time, if the inspector has carried out my suggestions, tomorrow should see the end of the business and in a short time, comparatively speaking, Gascoigne Medlar and your friend Henry should be able to sleep peacefully and to carry on what I feel is quite a valuable piece of social work. I have no doubt whatever that by their efforts at rehabilitating these socially maladjusted boys and girls, they are preventing crime and even achieving happiness for the subjects of their experiment.”

“Gascoigne only does it for money,” said Laura, throwing cold water on these eulogies.

“Ah, but Henry does not, and Henry, I am sure, is the motivating force behind the reforms.”

“Do the police expect to make an arrest pretty soon?” asked Ferdinand, referring to what, to him, was the practical side of the business.

“In answer to your question, my dear Ferdinand, I am bound to admit that, so far, we have nothing to put before a jury, I’m afraid, although there are one or two interesting points which might repay investigation, for, as you will see, we may venture to suggest where that lethal steel head could have been put on the javelin, and through whose agency.”

“Good Lord!” said Laura. “But that’s the thing in a nutshell, isn’t it?”

“Not quite, although Ferdinand’s researches, which I do hope have not taken up too much of his time...”

“Oh, no, I put a very experienced firm of private jacks on to it,” said Ferdinand. “They ferreted out most of what I’ve told you.”

“Well, they have occasioned in *me* some serious misgivings,” said Laura. “I thought, from Mrs Croc’s hints”—she fixed an accusing eye on her employer—“that I’d begun to get a pretty clear idea of various possible murderers, and that it only remained to pick the right one, but now...”

“What were your conclusions, then?” asked Dame Beatrice, with an eldritch cackle.

“Medlar might have taken a chance, I thought,” said Laura, “if Jones was blackmailing him.”

“There is no evidence that Jones *was* blackmailing him to any serious extent. Jones had fine rooms and a large salary and seems to have been a law unto himself in many ways, but there is no evidence that he was ‘bleeding’ Mr. Medlar.”

“There was the Bertha Potts business.”

“What was that?” asked Ferdinand.

“She claimed that she was pregnant by Jones.”

“But, my dear Laura, that wouldn’t induce Medlar to *murder* him! After all, which would damage the College more—a bit of scandal of that sort, or a murder?” demanded Ferdinand.

“Brings us back to Potts himself, you think? Well, we can’t do anything about *that*. Potts is dead.”

“But not murdered, I think,” said Dame Beatrice. Laura looked at her in surprise.

“I thought that was a *very* open question,” she said.

“I thought so, too, at first, but I have altered my opinion since we talked to Ferdinand, although, of course, the javelin *was* taken to the forge with a request that it be altered.”

“Well, we know it *wasn’t* altered there.”

“And never *could* have been, as we also know.”

“Do go on,” said Ferdinand to Laura. “I always find your deductions interesting.”

“I didn’t really make any more. I’d thought of Barry, of course, for the reason I gave you. He must have been livid when Colin was injured through Jones’s malicious stupidity. It wasn’t only that he was fond of the boy—over-fond, perhaps, judging by his previous reputation, now that we know what it was—but he had hopes of turning out a really first-class long-jumper. I suppose Colin *will* be able to take up athletics again?” Laura added, turning to Dame Beatrice.

“I do not know. The young and fit have marvellous powers of recuperation, but his injuries will take some time yet to right themselves.”

“But what about the other boy?” asked Ferdinand.

“Kirk? Well, I suppose, whoever the murderer was, if Kirk was blackmailing him and making him bring those drinks to the College under threat of exposing him to the police, well, there’s as good a motive as any.”

“Yes, that’s obvious, of course, but I still don’t know who the murderer is.”

“I’d also wondered about Miss Yale,” went on Laura. “Hamish said in one of his letters that he’d asked Miss Yale why she was content to look after a few wretched little maladjusted females at Joynings instead of taking on what he considered would be a worthwhile job for a woman of her capabilities. Of course we know the answer to that now, but I didn’t at the time.”

“But why should *she* murder Jones?” asked Ferdinand. “There would have to be a reason.”

“There could have been, as I saw it. Jones was known to be a pest with women. I think that if Miss Yale had thought Jones was making a set at any of her wretched chicks she would have murdered him quite cheerfully.”

“I think she might have been inhibited, you know, so far as causing the death of another person was concerned,” said Dame Beatrice. “She already had two deaths on her conscience.”

“Yes, it turned out that she had been warned, before she set out on that mountain scramble, about unfavourable weather conditions,” said Ferdinand, “but decided she knew better and so refused to change her plans and took a calculated risk which ended in tragedy and also ended her chosen career.”

“I did just toy with the thought of Lesley, too,” said Laura, “because Jones probably tried to make himself a nuisance there as well.”

“Dear me!” said Ferdinand, laughing. “In your opinion, the female of the

species is indeed deadlier than the male! However, you argued pretty logically, I would say, except that, as my mother has pointed out, it was not to any of these people's advantage to bring scandal and, no doubt, subsequent ruin on the College."

"People don't always think about things like that," retorted Laura, "when they really get desperate."

"Very true," said Dame Beatrice. "Well, let us sleep on it. We may need to be up betimes in the morning. Meanwhile, my dear boy, I should like to use your telephone, if I may."

"The inspector has arrested a man on suspicion of having removed property from enclosed premises with the intention of converting it to his own use?" asked Henry. "The police wish to have a confrontation in the presence of the whole staff? But why, Dame Beatrice? Nobody, so far as I know, has reported anything missing."

"Perhaps not, Mr. Henry. Nevertheless, concerning this arrest, the inspector and I both feel that we shall be in a stronger position if any of the staff can supply corroborative evidence."

"I think you will find we shall be loyal to one another, Dame Beatrice"

"But disloyal to the truth, and disloyal to the innocent?" asked Dame Beatrice. "I think you should realize, Mr. Henry, that, since the deaths of Mr. Jones and the lad Kirk, everybody here, whether student or lecturer, has been, to some extent, under suspicion."

"I don't care, all the same, for the criminal to be unmasked in public."

"His trial will take place in public."

"Well, I'll see what Gassie has to say, but I don't think he will be any keener on a staff-meeting show-down than I am."

"Your scruples do you infinite credit, and I share your sentiments, Mr. Henry. Nevertheless, justice must be seen to be done, and, when it *is* done, I am sure that you and Mr. Gascoigne will be the last to regret it."

"Anything which touches the good name of Joynings is a matter for regret, Dame Beatrice, and enough harm has been done to the College already by the reports—exaggerated, in many cases—of these terrible murders."

"Suppose I told you that the College will benefit from what you call this show-down?"

"I hardly see how that can be, unless it proves that none of us was involved."

"Well, that may be possible, up to a point. You have had your failures as well as your more numerous successes with your students, I take it?"

Henry looked perplexed.

"I thought you had decided that the murderer was not a student," he said. "I thought the fact that no student could get at a key to the steel-fronted store-cupboard which houses some of the apparatus for the field events proved that."

"The murderer was already in possession of a key, Mr. Henry."

"Jonah's key, do you mean? Oh, no, that's impossible. He might have got hold of it for the shot which killed Kirk, but not for the javelin, surely!"

"You are right. Forgive me for not enlightening you further, but the inspector and I have an agreement that nothing beyond what I have told you is to be disclosed until the meeting."

"Where am I to ask Gassie to hold it? In the senior common room? In one of the lecture rooms? In his office or his sitting-room?"

"Well, as the inspector will already have made his arrest, we think that the only place is the local police station. We shall not require the presence of Hamish, Martin, Celia and Jerry, but everybody else should put in an appearance."

"Including Miss Yale and Lesley? A police station is hardly the place for ladies!"

"I shall be there in the role of duenna," said Dame Beatrice solemnly.

It was a subdued and somewhat apprehensive group of two women and three men who, given seats, awaited the confrontation which they had been warned to expect.

"Have you *any* idea of what is going to happen, sir?" asked Barry. Gascoigne coughed.

"Gassie, my dear fellow," he said. "Not 'sir' but 'Gassie.' We are all friends here until the criminal is unmasked. That is what we have been promised—that the criminal will be unmasked. Needless to say, I have the utmost confidence in all of you."

"That's as well," said Miss Yale, who was seated next to him, "because I don't think I ever in my life felt less confidence in myself."

At this moment there was a slight but mysterious interruption. A uniformed policeman opened the door and ushered in Jerry.

"Hullo," said Henry. "To what are we indebted?"

"We thought you were one of those without a stain on your character," said Lesley. "Why have you been thrust in with all of us gaolbirds?"

Jerry found a vacant chair and sat down.

"I've no idea why I've been sent for," he said. "I had a phone call, about ten

minutes after you lot had started for the town, telling me to get my car out and join you here. I say, what's on? Does anybody know?"

The inspector came in and counted heads.

"Everybody present?" he asked. "Right." He turned his head towards the open doorway. "Very good, Ryder. You can bring him in." As a police constable and a tall young man entered, Gascoigne exclaimed, in a startled, incredulous tone,

"Good heavens, Merve! What are *you* doing here?"

"You recognize this man, then, do you, Mr. Medlar?" asked the inspector.

"Certainly. This is Mervyn, who was once one of my students and, later on, joined my staff."

"Quite so, sir. Now, does anybody recognize this?" The inspector laid on the table a pistol.

"Looks like one of my starting-guns," said Jerry, bending forward to inspect it.

"You may handle it," said the inspector. "We'd better be quite sure."

"Oh, yes, it's mine all right," said Jerry. He handed it to Henry. "What do *you* think?" he asked.

"It's the Webley Conversion .38, of course," said Henry. "We've got a fire-arms certificate for it," he added. "Where did you get it, Inspector?"

"From Mervyn Sharp, alias Harper, here, when we frisked him."

"But where did *he* get it?" asked Jerry.

"From the same cupboard as he got the javelin and the shot, sir."

"You're a liar!" snarled the prisoner, speaking for the first time. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Ryder?" said the inspector, turning to the impassive young constable.

"Taken from Sharp when Police Constable Bellairs and I frisked him upon arrest, sir."

"Well, why shouldn't I have a starting-gun?" demanded the prisoner. "It isn't loaded."

"Neither is it yours," the inspector pointed out. "These two gentlemen have declared that it is the property of Mr. Jerry Wicks here."

"The property of Joynings College, as a matter of fact," said Gascoigne primly. "Jerry is not the owner."

"Ah, yes," said the inspector. "That means that the charge on which I'm holding Sharp is of being on enclosed premises with intent to rob and, further, with intent to murder, both of which intents he has carried out. I shall now



formally...”

Before he could finish the sentence, Sharp had leapt from the side of the young police-constable, seized the pistol, which Henry had put down dangerously near that end of the table, and had shot himself in the chest.

“Oh, hell!” said the inspector. “You young fool, Ryder! You ought to have known it was loaded. Quickly! Get a doctor! No. Get Dame Beatrice. She’s in the waiting-room. *She’s* a doctor!”

They were back in the senior common room at Joynings. Lunch was over and coffee was being served.

“Oh, yes, Sharp will live to stand trial,” said Dame Beatrice. “His attempted suicide was tantamount to a confession, which is just as well, since the evidence we have is not as complete as the inspector would wish.”

“But how did you come to fix on Merve?” asked Miss Yale. “Of course, he’s the obvious choice, when one comes to think of it, but I never even thought of him.”

“The idea that an outsider was the murderer first came to me when Mr. Henry told me that the whole College was in Hall for Thursday dinner. That fitted in very well with the estimated time of death. I must admit, though, that it was a long time before I thought of Sharp,” Dame Beatrice modestly replied. “I think the first clue I received was when I was told that Sharp, having been advised that he was not to return here when he was discharged from hospital, had been given a post in his uncle’s steel works. That tied in with the lethal head which had been put on that javelin. Then there was the question of motive.”

“Several of us might be thought to have had a motive for murdering Jonah,” said Barry, grimly. “Myself, for one.”

“Yes, you were on my short list for a time,” said Dame Beatrice equably; “so was Mr. Medlar.”

“I?” cried Gascoigne, aghast. “Oh, but, really!” Dame Beatrice fixed on him a basilisk eye. “I had my reasons for suspecting you,” she said, “as you should know, Mr. Medlar. It was abundantly clear that, to some extent, you were being blackmailed by your brother-in-law.”

“I grudged poor Davy nothing!” cried Gascoigne.

“Well, you and Mr. Barry were my chief suspects, as I say.” Dame Beatrice went on, “but what with the steel works, plus Sharp’s previous reputation and the fact that he had been a student here...”

“And so knew all the ropes, even before he came on to the staff,” said Jerry, “and was a bad hat, anyway...”

“And might, I thought, have retained his key to the store-cupboard. Then he could also have found out that Miss Yale had a key which would open the heating-cellar. He had a motive for hating Jones and Mr. Medlar. One had been given the gymnastics post which he had expected would be his, the other had not only given that post away, but had subsequently dismissed him from the staff altogether. He fully intended, when opportunity offered, to kill the one and ruin the other.”

“But how did he know that the students had shut Jonah up in the stoke-hole?” asked Martin. “That’s what’s been such a mystery to me, and that’s why my private opinion had always been, until now, that one of the students must have killed Jonah.”

“I think, but cannot prove, that Sharp had kept in touch with one of the students,” Dame Beatrice replied.

“Paul-Pierre, for my money,” said Celia. “They were as thick as thieves when Merve was on the staff. Merve spent most of his time coaching P-P. That’s why his swimming has come on so well, I expect.”

“You mean that the French youth was an accessory to *murder*?” asked Henry.

“I do not suppose Paul-Pierre thought of murder,” said Dame Beatrice, “but he knew that Sharp hated Mr. Jones and he probably decided that it would add a little more excitement to the so-called rag if Sharp got into the cellar and attacked its unwilling inmate.”

“But the javelin,” said Miss Yale. “Merve couldn’t have got the job on the javelin done in that short space of time. Jonah was only in the cellar a couple of days before he was killed, I thought.”

“Oh, I think Sharp had stolen the javelin long before he killed Mr. Jones with it,” said Dame Beatrice. “Mr. Henry has made it clear that not more than six javelins were ever in use at any one time, and that, under his somewhat lax supervision, the javelin-throwers always chose their own implements. The fact that one was missing for a time seems to have gone unnoticed. It was a mistake on Sharp’s part to put it back on the rack.”

“So you think that was Merve,” said Martin. “I thought the students who buried the body put the javelin back.”

“So did I, at first,” Dame Beatrice admitted, “but as it became clear that they had no possible access to that particular cupboard, I was compelled to change my mind.”

“But why *did* he return the javelin to store,” asked Lesley, “if it was such a stupid thing to do?”

“Once he had committed murder with it, his only idea was to get rid of it in a way which did not give any lead as to his previous possession of it, I suppose,” said Henry. “How did you come to spot it so quickly, Miss Yale?”

“Because I had known for some weeks that one of your javelins was missing,” the redoubtable woman replied, “but, as it was one of your eight, and not one of my four, I did not bother about it. However, as soon as the emphasis was on javelins, I thought of the missing one, and, of course, there it was, new steel point and all, the perfect weapon for murder. A long, sharp spear, eight and a half feet between killer and victim, one good shove, and Bob’s your uncle.”

“And that little rat Kirk—sorry, didn’t think!” said Lesley.

“Yes. Kirk was on his way—or so he thought—to the women-students’ quarters after dinner that night and saw Sharp, I think,” said Dame Beatrice. “He knew him well, of course, since it was only a matter of weeks since Sharp had left the College, first to go into hospital and then to be dismissed. When Mr. Jones was found dead, Kirk, who was under no illusion about Sharp’s antagonism against the man who had usurped his gymnastics post, put two and two together and began to blackmail Sharp into providing the drinks and cigarettes.”

“And Paul-Pierre, I suppose, tipped off his former swimming-coach, so that Sharp knew where Jonah was incarcerated,” said Miss Yale, “and I expect he was also the student who terrorized Kirk into going on providing the drinks after Jonah’s death. What a nasty bit of work he is! Shall you keep him here, Gassie?”

“We shall see what happens when Merve is brought to trial,” Gascoigne replied. “Well, I am sure we all owe a deep debt of gratitude to Dame Beatrice for clearing up the matter for us. I think that, but for her intervention, we might even have had to close the College.”

“That would have been a great pity,” said Henry. “I feel we are doing useful work here, on however small a scale.”

“Well,” said Dame Beatrice, “I will take my leave of you all. Is it true that Hamish will be given leave of absence in September?”

“I don’t want it,” said Hamish. “There is a shortage of staff with Jones gone, so, if Mr. Medlar will have me until I leave in October... ”

“My dear fellow! Delighted! Delighted!” cried Gascoigne. “But, by the way, James, as I think I have mentioned before, er—not ‘Mr. Medlar’ but ‘Gassie’.”

“Thank you very much, sir,” said Hamish.

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[December 15, 2006]